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VOICES IN THE HILLS

BY

FRED THAUMAZO

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Fred Thaumazo

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VOICES IN THE HILLS

CHAPTER I.

It was a friendly Sunday afternoon in August, 1908.

The softly shaking foliage of the woody mountain glittered in the placidly moving lake.

A rowboat containing six persons, three of whom, hatless, are easily recognized as men, just appears in view as it turns round a little isle.

On the porch of the house facing the lake Mrs. Ross waves a handkerchief to her approaching boarders in the boat and, releasing a heavy sigh, addresses herself to her husband who, as Brother Cal, is a familiar and welcome figure all over the county of Delaware:

"The people"—with "people" the elderly couple on the porch of the white house meant their boarders—"won't believe that a steamboat used to run down the lake."

"I figger, Marion, they"—"they" are the promi-

nent rich—"hadn't oughter built the lake yonder. They catcht the course of the springs somehow. If that there fetchin' of our water keeps up we won't even have enuff for boarders, let 'lone farmin'."

"Who thinks of farming? If only you could earn enough by peddling to pay off the mortgage."

Cal turned his thumbs in silence.

Big Bro. Cal spent a very entertaining Sunday afternoon. Sitting broadly on the veranda of his hospitable boarding-house on the road to the village and at a stone's throw from the lake, he was adding on a slip of paper every automobile passing up and down through the red, roof-covered bridge, returning with unwearied good-natured nods the frequent salutations of the passersby. Although his many narrow escapes from injury or death, from which only his quick-witted leap and grasp of the terrified horse's bridle had saved him, were fresh in his memory, Cal was too whole-chested to bear a grudge against the occupants of the tearing autos.

If taken away by a friendly call to the village he gave his wife Marion paper and pencil, and she, while rocking demurely her burdensome avoirdupois, continued energetically the task.

The city-boarders, of course, did not find any amusement in this pastime of Mr. and Mrs. Ross. To them the Saturday night's dance in the Firemen's Hall on the other side of the bridge, with the fiddler's one tune for three long hours, the dance-master's repeated sing-song of "One more couple!"

and "Change your partners!" and the boys' merry stampeding presented a far more exciting pastime.

But there were two occasions for general entertainment. First, when Bro. Cal, who was a mighty Nimrod, would tell, once and again, how in the good old days he "fit" bears that were roaming through the hills. And then, when before retiring they would assemble to enjoy the flashlight of the flyer as it enwrapped the orchard, the lake, the wooded hills in the moving cloud of fire.

No hosts had ever succeeded better in uniting their visitors into friends, and no visitors had ever regarded their hosts with more friendship, than was the case in the boarding house on the lake. Under their roof there was no nook for malice and slander. All men and women, made welcome, however differing in ancestry, learned by the example of Bro. Cal and his spouse Marion to find in the antagonism of race and creed but a bloated bubble of prejudice.

Surely, intimate contact and restful thinking aid in stimulating comprehension. For, however little interest people in the busy whirl of the city may take in the remarks of their fellow-beings, the relaxation of a care-free stay in the country affords them an introspection that makes them interesting to themselves and others.

The three men and three women that were just landing from the rowboat gave one last look at the lake—which in the last few weeks had so consistently shrunk that an island green with wild vege-

tation had emerged from its depth—revealed through their types widely varying ancestry. The two young girls, the one with jet black hair and passion-hidden eyes, the other, younger, with light brown braids and gay looks, both dark complexioned, of decidedly southern type, were of Armenian parentage—as was the young man of swarthy appearance who followed them in the company of a blonde-round-little woman and a tall, well-balanced man in spectacles. The short, stocky, middle-aged fellow who moored the boat and leaped so sprightly over the cobble-stones at the lake, to catch up with his friends, is unmistakably a Russian, for he sails the air with his arms in the fashion of a Russian soldier on march. Waving exuberantly their greeting to the couple on the porch, the party straightway make for the orchard, where a group of women and men, shielded from the slanting rays of the sun by wide-branched fruit-trees, were sitting and lying on the lawn. There the mother of the girls, a pallid invalid, expects them impatiently, and the father, a slim, short, and worried individual, looks up for a minute from his Bible.

At the approach of the newcomers two interested readers drop their Sunday papers and rise to meet them. Both serious-faced persons, he, lean, lanky and lithe; she, dry, dustproof and drab, both beyond the disappointments of youth and disentangled from any of its connections. Another fellow, lazily opening his eyes, stretches his fleshy body and yells out:

"Tired rowing, Ben?"

"Tired lying 'round, Al?" responds the Russian.

Here, at the streamlet running by the orchard, opposite the house-wall of the village, the boarders, under the shade of the willows, often pass chatty hours while fishing. But they never thought of assembling the whole family for a general entertainment with an interesting topic. This idea struck the lanky fellow who happened to be a native from Brooklyn, and he proceeded forthwith to spring it on his friends:

"To test the true nature of the individual," he suggests, "let for the remaining evenings a member tell a story, either from tradition or recollection, but one dearest to his memory. Six men, six stories."

The suggestion met with general approval.

The next evening all occupants of the white house took their seats on the steps and chairs of the spacious veranda. Even old Aunt Mary, though crippled with rheumatism, rested on the door-sill, and Cal's call of "Little ones!" brought the shy, five-toed cat out from the dark and under his care.

The bespectacled, philosophical German, Mr. Freiwahl, usually addressed as Doctor, found cause to upbraid his thrifty sister-in-law, the drab girl, and his dignified little wife for their "penuriousness."

"Next time a tramp wants a little aid I want you to consider him."

"I certainly did," answered the rotund little woman, gracefully.

"That reminds me," he concluded, "of a gift I once received from a poor old man."

"What about it?" "Let's hear!" came in chorus from all sides of the porch.

"It's the story of a horse-shoe," said the Doctor, "that most strongly lives in my memory."

"A horse-shoe means luck," assured him the wise sister-in-law.

"Then let's hope I'll have luck in telling it," replied he, and began the round with

AN ODD PRESENT.

The slowest horse-car was dangling through Avenue A. Tamsen had not yet been made Warden of Der Chail, and the avenue was dimly illuminated with sleepy gas lights. Though Fourteenth Street was only a block away, the humdrum of swelldom seemed to be a mile off.

But on a New Year's Eve we got busy with the rest of the old town. That is, not exactly we. I was naturally left to my sad thoughts and tumbler, and had to content myself with looking out of the window at the passing and cajoling crowd of boys and girls, young and old.

I was certainly lonesome. The few friends I had —what right had a drug clerk to have friends, and especially girl friends?—never gave a thought to my forlorn longing on such an evening and did not come in to pass a few minutes in my company, even if it were only to say "A Happy New Year!" Well, they may fear the looks of your boss, even though he was absent. They knew quite well that the boss did not like to see the time of his clerk, that no doubt

belonged to his employer, wasted, even though it was evening and the buying public absent.

Even, even—why couldn't I think without an even? Confound my thoughts, even though I was alone and couldn't help thinking! Even, even!

I retired to the rear room and, taking up a pharmaceutical paper, tried to understand an editorial entitled: "Look pleasant!" even though the blowing of the trumpets and horns, and the laughter and joking on the streets jarred my facial expression.

Even. Sure enough it was New Year's Eve.

I dropped my paper and sank into meditations on the good will of man. I compared my lot with that of other workers and found that the least good will is shown the man behind the counter. I speculated on the greed of all ages and came to the result that we lived in the age of universal greed.

I had become a thorough pessimist, and yet everybody of my acquaintance ascribed my unsuccessful career to light heartedness. But right there and then I made an earnest New Year's resolution to become just as neglectful of other people's troubles as any successful man should be.

Presently I was startled by a loud cough. Ostensibly, there was someone in the store. Rushing out, I saw an old man standing at the door. His white hair shone through a half-torn brim of a derby. A shabby short coat of uncertain color hardly covered his shivering frame, and his hand, now tipping the hat, was stiff from cold.

With a visible expression of awe in his careworn face he approached me. Taking him for a beggar, I drew some change from my pocket.

"Excuse me, sir," said he, apologizingly, "I wanted something else."

"Go ahead, my friend!" and I smiled encouragingly.

"If you be kind enough to let me have some gum arabic, you'd help me——"

"Certainly, old man!" I interrupted him.

I gave him the gum arabic. He took the package, but still hesitated.

"Is it anything else I can do for you?" asked I.

"I haven't got any money," answered he slowly. "And yet I need some turpentine."

Soon a small bottle of turpentine was in his hands. I could see from the expression of his face that he wished to pour out his grateful feelings, yet did not care to do it, since he guessed that the friend he found was averse to that. And as he stood at the door, uncertain what to do, I walked up to him, shook his hand, and wished him a happy New Year.

With a smile on his face, the old man walked out into the slush of the street.

I went back into the rear room and sat down. The smile of the old man made me happy. I now forgave my friends and enemies, alike. I again became optimistic. If nobody cared for me and if I should have to pass this evening alone,—ought I not to be contented to know that I was young and well able to acquire new friends? And does a good deed not repay itself? And is the satisfaction acquired from a just and honorable life not worth more than the companionship of capricious friends?

Again the door was opened. Again it was the tall, old man.

I became suspicious. But no, no. I would not doubt his honesty. Above all, I shall not hurt his sentiments to-night.

He asked for some of that paper lying on the counter and, upon receiving it, withdrew.

Hardly did I have time to retire to my seat in the rear room, when again the door was opened, and again appeared the old fellow.

The curt manner of commercialism was pretty nearly getting the best of my better judgment.

Was I to become the victim of mendicants? I did not move.

Presently I recollected the story, told me in my boyhood, of two wise men, one of whom was noted for his skepticism, the other for his kindness. A rogue, bent upon embarrassing both, approached first the skeptic with the request to teach him the philosophy of life while he was standing on one leg. The skeptic scornfully drove him away. The rogue went straightway to the second wise man and asked him the same question. The kind man was not in the least disturbed or provoked, but answered in his placid manner: "Love thy neighbor as thyself!" Whereupon the rogue went away—a better man.

I felt ashamed of my attitude. Smilingly I walked out and inquired from the old man what the reason was for his quick return.

"You see, sir, I am getting old, I wanted with that nice paper some of that red twine,—if you could spare it."

Cheerfully I tore off some twine and handed it to my strange visitor, who quickly disappeared.

But why did he never explain for what purpose he needed all those little things? To say the least, the behavior of the old man was extraordinary. He had not the manner of the professional beggar who moves one to pity by abject bows, a trembling voice, an oft repeated story.

What if someone of the neighborhood is using him as a means of annoying me? Very well, they

have not succeeded to shake my belief in the good will toward man.

Standing at the prescription counter and facing the street, I could see the merry people, young and old, pass by and, blowing their horns and trumpets into each other's faces, greet one another in the innocent fashion of the occasion.

There!—Again that strange customer. He opens slowly the door, enters, approaches hastily the nearest counter, takes from under his coat a package, places it on some cut paper, and, without saying a word, tries to escape.

But quick as lightning I am at the door and get a firm hold of his arm.

"What is that?" asked I, pointing at the package wrapped in the same paper and twine he got from me but a few minutes ago.

"Something for you," said he, very much disturbed; "something I found in the street."

I admit, my suspicion was thoroughly aroused.

"I want to see it before you leave," demanded I.

"Please, don't," begged he.

With trembling hands he removed the twine, but presently, as though struck with an idea illuminating an avenue of escape, covered the package with his feeble, outstretched fingers.

"Boss," began he, appealingly, "let me explain everything, and promise me not to open the package before I've gone."

I gave him no promise, but simply said: "Go ahead!"

It seemed hard for him to start.

Reluctantly only he gave the information.

"You see," began he, "I am an old man, going on sixty-five years. New York is not my home, I was born many miles away from here; for thirty years

I've been a well-paid mechanic in San Francisco." Here he stopped, as though he did not care to proceed with his narrative. But noticing my attentive and expectant attitude, he continued: "Well, sir, I've had bad luck. Fifteen years ago my only son died. He was the finest boy parents may wish, and his poor mother did not survive him long. I went to the bad. I missed them all over; I was lost. I couldn't work and drank heavily. Well, sir, I kept that up for two years. When I came to my senses again, I was a sick man. My stomach was ruined by drink and no boss would stand me in his shop—you understand why, Doctor. Well, I started out at odd jobs—to make a living. I went from place to place, away from home,—for I wanted to be as far away from my old home as possible. I went from saloon to saloon. You see, sir, there is always a little job or a little rest you can get in a saloon. But, naturally, you always drink more or less if you're in such company. To-night I got an odd job for a saloon-keeper, and I needed some gum arabic and turpentine. You were very kind to me. For fifteen years I haven't met a soul to give me a friendly smile, for fifteen years I didn't hear a voice wishing me an honest Happy New Year."

His voice was trembling. It was convincing. I felt ashamed at my behavior.

"Well, sir," he concluded, "as I walked out of here, thinking of the cheerful way you helped me along, and of my only boy that's dead, who was just as kind as you, I saw a horseshoe lying in the slush on the car tracks. 'Hold on!' thinks I, 'this is for the good little doctor.'"

"So, you see, the gum arabic and turpentine I needed for to bronze up a job, and the paper and the twine for to wrap up the horseshoe."

I was overawed. I looked silently and reverently at the old man.

Regaining my composure, I rushed back to my room, for I could not think of any other way of showing my appreciation than by giving him some money that he certainly needed.

But returning, I found that he had quietly departed.

I removed the paper from the package and saw the horseshoe—neatly bronzed.

CHAPTER II.

The next day's glory was creditably earned by the Armenians, and, above all, by Enok, their chevalresque spokesman.

These people, whose girls usually cowered to the rear of their male companions, took the centre of interest, as amid a sudden impulse of naïve enthusiasm their quaint airs re-echoed through the woods.

In the afternoon, the boarders, with the exception of Mr. and Mrs. Darridiel, had gone beyond the tool-house and reservoir, imbedded in the thick-wooded narrow valley of a creek, and, turning to their left, had come upon a small open ground in the forest, that looked down the mountain through an almost impenetrable thicket of age-withered leaves and brush and trunks above which rose mighty trees storming with lusty voices their defiance of the elements.

On the slowly ascending plain to their right a herd of cows was moving placidly along, stopping once in a while to gaze at the visitors. Enok, reminded of an ancient legend yet alive in the minds of his countrymen, put his violin under the chin and bid all be watchful in noticing the attention the cows would pay his melody.

"Khaval," he explained, "is an old shepherd song that attracts all cattle."

Really, the cows seemed to find pleasure in listening to the music,—which, by the way, does not mean to detract from the merit of the player,—as they drew so threateningly near that the timid sister-in-law of the Doctor and the triumphant—though shy as they were pretty—Armenian girls cautiously removed themselves from the exterior of the circle. The thin-voiced strains of the violin, fairly well played even for an audience less easily satisfied than the present, could not divulge all the beauty in fact belonging to a flute; yet the ancient bard should have felt gratified at the touching memory paid him by man and beast, after so many dozens of centuries and so many transformations of custom had vanquished. Enok, inflated with success, rendered on his violin, to the edification of his listeners, a Turkish popular song, "Euskadar," beginning sweetly and tenderly, rising to passion and enthusiasm and ending in a wild whirl of exhilaration. He had played it with such fervor, sometimes adding to the tune of the strings the song of his melodious voice, that it appeared beyond comprehension how an enmity such as is related to exist between Turk and Armenian could lodge in his breast. The doubts of his listeners were doubled after they had heard him and his nieces sing "Pomp-Vorodam," the anthem of the Armenians, rendered with considerably less emotion.

Enok, while not quite free from clannish fanati-

cism, showed in his answer to the queries about the hostility of Christian and Mohammedan that he was an intelligent and observing student:

"The enmity you allude to is all to the interest of foreign, such as Russian and British, promoters of hostilities. Where do you find another example in the histories of nations that different peoples under the rule of a conquering power have kept their customs and religions for many, many centuries when it was possible for a mighty despot with an outnumbering soldiery to disarm or exterminate them or force them to worship at the shrine of his God?

"Personal liberty needs no theoretical vindication with us, since it is admitted in our lands to be the practical heirloom of everybody; while the first act of European conquerors is the ruthless destruction of the love, and its meaning, of personal liberty, by permitting to bear arms only to those who by their position as rulers and by their connection with legalizing powers have all the means in hand wherewith to oppress the dependent classes.

"The so-called centuries-old fight for liberty by subjugated races was ever instigated and kindled by the cabal of European jealousy and avarice.

"And Poetry to the Oriental means Life not Fiction. It is not taken out of the lives of our peasantry and citizens, we need not busy ourselves in printed volumes to acquaint our imagination with Nature. Our customs are not leveled down to a monotonous, colorless platitude, and, were it not for

the adversities kept alive by foreign money, we should content ourselves with the simple village life instead of wandering away to the lures of a strange world. Nature speaks to us with a thousand tongues, while the sacrifice of the proud industrial centre dissatisfies body and soul."

The little assembly took his explanation calmly as befits well-disciplined Occidentals. Only the Russian shook his head incredulously, as though he had found a hair in the soup, as they say.

"It is to be desired," he ventured to remark, "that a high culture should find it possible to combine civilization with liberty, industrialism with happiness. But the finger of time points out the fact that no culture can run that course; that with the attainment of high conceptions of the world within and without us a chasm breaks between the endowed and the dependent spheres, estranging them and embittering them as they view each other from their separate camps. And the result is the opposite of the high promise made by cultural attainments."

"Very well!" retorted the Armenian, hotly. "Granted that the raised storm destroy the prosperity of the land, the attainments gained become, in a measure, the property of some victor. Just as the wisdom of the Phrygians, Libyans, Phenicians, ruthlessly destroyed and despoiled by the Romans, was gathered by the latter. The slumbering nations taunted in their stupor by invading Europeans will react in the lapse of time like the cannon that bursts

aboard the ship. Aimed though it be against tribes and lands, it sets the ship aflame, and the British and Russian Empires, held together with constantly renewed cement, breaks into a thousand splinters. Destroyers fall victims to their own forms of destruction."

"And liberty goes a-begging," the Russian said dryly. The silence following became so uncomfortable that the Doctor and others rose and looked interested at the darkening woods.

The cows had long since disappeared in the direction of a farmhouse near the entrance to the forest, and the party felt it their duty to repair for the repast awaiting them at home.

* * * * *

When the boarders, after supper, reached the veranda, they found big, grizzly Bro Cal sitting broadly on the stoop and bemoaning the vanishing water of the lake out of which the island appeared to grow larger every moment.

"That island," remarked Enok, "reminds me of an old man who met with ingratitude. If people knew how to make use of the island or it had powers of its own to impress our minds and withstand the water, it may become a delightful spot to rest in."

"And the old man?" he was asked.

"If he had not met with ingratitude or had had strength to withstand a rising suspicion he should have lived longer to the benefit of mankind. Let me, then, tell you the story of

THE OATH OF IBRAHIM.

There was no man more respected for his wisdom and better known for his kindness than Ibrahim, the one time merchant of Algiers. Daily he thought of the good deeds prescribed by the Koran. Daily, when from the minaret sounded the prayer, he washed his hands, bowed toward Mecca, and remembered the law to distribute alms.

He was not world-wise. But, being rich, he tried to relieve the unfortunate lot of those who were not endowed with worldly blessings. And, being learned in the sciences of his days and convinced of the wisdom of the surahs, he conscientiously undertook to instruct his slaves. And, though he had slaves according to the custom of his country, he dismissed them after a couple of years and declared them free.

One day he bid a slave come to his room, and spoke thus to him:

"Five years you have been under my roof. You have listened to my exhortations with attention. You cannot say that I have maltreated you. You have never been wanting for food, shelter, commiseration, and instruction. You were a slave in name only, and to-day I wish to bestow on you a true blessing.

"I intend to journey for a few days to a nearby pilgrimage. And you are from this day a free man. Go where you please, begin what you desire. But stay in the ways of Allah; do no injustice, for the fires of Allah's scorn are ready to devour the unjust.

"Now that I have laid in your power the armor with which to face the world, you may go."

"O, sir," stammered the negro, his eyes bright from emotion.

"And," continued the noble Arab, "not as a poor man I want you to begin your new life."

With these words he opened a chest, took from it a leather bag and let the gold-coins roll out before the bewildered eyes of the servant.

"Take that, and when I return I'll give you two acres of land."

The negro fell on his knees, crying, and, seizing the hands of his benefactor, covered them with kisses.

"Yet," soothingly concluded Ibrahim, "if Fate ever turn against you, remember that the doors of your former master are always open to you."

"O, light of Islam!" cried the negro, "let me but serve you. All your princely gifts cannot outweigh the favor of your presence. Let me serve you as a freeman!"

The eyes of the old man rejoiced with pride and he pressed the grateful servant to his heaving breast.

After Ibrahim had publicly declared his former slave a freeman, he left the latter as custodian of his house and started out with other servants on his journey.

But as soon as the horses had vanished in a cloud of dust, a wild cupidity lurked out of the eyes of the negro, and avarice, heretofore well concealed, overpowered his senses. He hastily broke open caskets, cupboards, and closets, pressed silver and gold and coins into two large leather-bags and soon, with well filled baggage, he rode out of town.

Upon his return Ibrahim was so overcome with grief at the treacherous action of the fugitive, that he tore his clothes and took the oath, never to place any confidence in a slave or his like. Yet when the thief was caught, Ibrahim did not take part in his

prosecution; he turned away from him and sent him out of the house.

It happened soon after that a young man stood at the threshold of the aggrieved man's home and warned him thus:

"Sir, I was once your servant, and the man does not forget what fortune was his when a child. My ungrateful brother is meditating evil thoughts and laying snares for you. Come to-night outside the town wall where lies my acre. There I shall watch over you."

"Thank you," responded the old man, assuringly, and dismissed the warner.

"It might as well be you who is laying snares!" said Ibrahim, left alone, to himself, and decided to stay at home and not to trust "that ilk." The oath bound him to Allah, and Allah would watch over him.

Bowing toward East he said his night prayer, went to bed, and soon slept peacefully.

It was past midnight and Algiers wrapped up in the invisible darkness of slumber, when a dismal crackling, a sharp and sudden flickering roused Ibrahim. Half stupefied from terror and half stunned by smoke, the old man looked about him with bewilderment for the cause of his imperiled situation. The heat grew intense and through the smoke broke flaming tongues.

Gathering his remaining powers, he mastered his fainting body, and finally reached the street.

Exhausted and singed, he fell prostrate in front of his burning house.

"Allah!" murmured he with his last breath, "forgive me for not confiding in my friend. And that the malevolence of one man killed my belief in the magnanimity of another, I pray, forgive me! And

that I trusted to Fate and resigned my reason, Allah——"

Ibrahim was not given to finish the last sentence.

The walls of the burning house gave way, the roof sank in, a gust of smoke arose, and Ibrahim lay dead by the side of the ruins.

CHAPTER III.

Since on Wednesday the ladies, accompanied by Mr. Darridiel, were occupied with picking blackberries in the nearby woods, the five men-boarders, the dignified Doctor, the bristling Armenian, the tall and nimble Brooklyn druggist, the smooth and fleshy salesman, and the stocky and stern Russian, rigged up the farmer's dilapidated field-wagon and took a straw-ride to the falls. As they left the railroad station and the lake-view behind them and were driving up the sun-beaten, dusty path, a thick, dark, inky cloud collected and spread over the western mountain-range. The foreground on valley and crest smiled a light and dark green invitation, while the meaning of the soot covered depth was undistinguishable. Like battlements on a castle or guards on a fort,—motionless, silent, serious—single watchers stood on top of foggy blue walls, and looked down from the green bleakness intersecting them.

A black cloud veiled the sun from their sight as our friends drove brown and balky Charlie and black and bold Mollie through the woods. All was quiet just now as if waiting to see—and breathlessly expecting it—whether the threatening clouds would pass or come down. Then a low hush went through the trees like a voice that would reassuringly say:

Remain, wanderers, with us, we'll follow you, we'll follow you, we'll warn and soothe you! Then again all was quiet. Only like the greeting of a welcome, once in a while, a murmur arose in the woods and rustled over their heads.

The dark cloud moves from the sun. From the tallest tree on the highest peak comes a joyous salute, like a watchful chief it bows to the guards on all sides and to the dense army below. From one end to the other answers a cheering and clamoring echo.

Once more the open country comes into view and, as the riders enter upon the road, there follows them from the woody mountain range a gleeful send-off as though the playing winds were carrying on their balsamic wings the message: Speed on, dear friends, speed on to peace!

"Look here!" pointed the middle-aged lover of poetry and spirit-like Brooklyn druggist at two mountains facing one another a mile away up the road. "The secret is out. I've always wondered why the Ancients built the tremendous statues of animals, and where they got the inspiration for the Pyramids. But now I can understand how, emerging from the desert or flat-land and in sudden view of mountains, the distance would mold elevations into soft and angular shapes of figures. Here is a resting lion on one side and a perfect pyramid on the other."

Indeed, it appeared thus to the other occupants of the wagon. The lion's proud head, his outstretched curved body; the pointed pinnacle, the straight lines

of the pyramid, with the soft colors of the atmosphere about them, brought out a variety of ejaculations from the men, that more than descriptive language expressed the uniformity of their admiration and astonishment.

Pity to say, the further they rode, the sooner the picture dissolved itself into new masses of separating altitudes; their first impression yet overwhelming them, their vision was not given time for new and startling ones.

At last, the sound of falling water reminded them of their destination. Hidden deeply in a gorge, down a steep declivity, dark and mysterious, the fall rushed its waters through a narrow and stony valley. Leaving horses and wagon in an abandoned barn nearby, the picnickers descended, at the peril of their lives it seemed, the rocky road, and, giving the old, demolished "Indian mill" a quick inspection, jumped over the bare stones of the creek to the opposite bank, where a mossy ground under an overhanging stone-wall offered an ideal resting-place.

"What energy in that steady run of the waters!" exclaimed the druggist, after they had seated themselves around a hastily prepared spread of sandwiches and milk. "Coming and going, humming and flowing, drumming and sowing. All satisfaction and lustre in its bustle and crystal and hustle. Oh, and there are so many of us sick at heart who never understand and never hear the voice of Nature. Only yesterday our friend Enok denied us the faculty to

be in unison with nature. But I knew a man who was sick at heart because, separated from nature's song and play and sun and peace, his soul and body starved in the city.

"And talk of the artifice of our industrial life and our inability and unwillingness to adapt ourselves to those conditions! Our friend Enok did not see below the surface of things when he is convinced that we are dull enough to permit conditions to level us all down to the required standards of modern industrialism. Our nature rebels against it as strongly, and perhaps stronger, than any people have revolted against the destruction of the opportunities to enjoy, to develop, to fertilize and fructify. Time was when a man and a woman grew families, now they grow herds. But look at the revenge of nature, at the revolt of ourselves! The children of the cities are beginning to fill our asylums and penal institutions, the young people crave excitement instead of enjoyment, the men, at an age to have vigor pulsating through their muscles, are crestfallen and hopeless; the women, revered as idols of gentleness, fill the streets with vulgar hours."

"And yet," interposed the easy-going salesman, "men are satisfied to ruin their country for the sake of woman's favors."

"And lest you forget," added the Russian, "we are living in the age of woman's Revolution."

His brow was clouded with apprehension as the druggist caught that word of the Russian.

"This so-called revolution of woman is an indictment against her own sex. It emanates from those women who have no sense of responsibility, though they may dwell on that virtue ever so much, and is transmitted to those of their unfortunate sisters who from lack of training or education are a drag-net to their sweating husbands. They, in imitation of their irresponsible and idling sisters who lead but the life of their irresponsible and idling husbands, are shouting themselves hoarse for a cause that can never benefit them or their families.

"But, methinks, as soon as men could be brought to realize how heavy their burden becomes when they are workers and fathers, and those with an income fixed and secure could be made to understand the scandalous position of themselves, and their wives, so soon will they take woman and the connubial state at their value: assured self-support or state-support. As breeders, women have outlived wedlock so soon as they assert themselves; as comrades, they like to associate with whomever strikes their trifling fancy. As workers, they are behind their grandmothers in the feminine and their mental inferiors in the masculine world. Such being indisputably the case, woman should be made comfortable by the community that is to receive those blessings with which nature endows her."

As everybody felt that the druggist had a story to relate, it was thought wise not to delay it by interrupting remarks.

"Women," continued the druggist, who was now regarded as quite a woman hater, "are as sensitive as thieves in fear of detection, and it's best none is present to listen to

THE WRECK'S MESSAGE.

One day at noon, while I was alone, a man entered the drug store, slowly, precautiously.

As he approached the counter where I was busily engaged in wrapping packages, the stranger looked intently upon my physiognomy. And the moment our eyes met, like a flash the recollection of our estrangement loomed up in us. For a short interval we stood still and gazed at each other in embarrassment. What took place in the soul of the visitor, I, then, could but fathom. But my heart beat with painful emotions and my tongue was paralyzed with indignation.

"You recognize me?" he began in a voice that had lost all color and dignity, while he stared at me with eyes that had lost all hope and desire.

I nodded, reproachfully.

"I've done you dirty," he continued, with sepulchral voice, "I know it. But if my fate be known to you, you have the satisfaction of vengeance."

No, I was not revengeful. A sentiment of pity, yea, of horror, crept over me. Many years ago I had been in the employ of this eccentric man, at that time the young proprietor of a drug store in a newly opened section of upper Williamsburg. He had engaged me without any request for references, and I, a stranger in the town and pretty nearly stranded, rewarded him, out of gratitude for that

act, with a service that in the nick of time saved him from failure. When upon the solicitation of a patent medicine house whose output he had cut the wholesale firm he dealt with refused to fill his orders, he sent me downtown to talk the matter over. I found that he had overdrawn his account and that he was classed as a "bad pay." After unsuccessful attempts in a few places, I, at last, found myself face to face with an enraged superintendent on the main floor of S—— on W—— Street. It was pretty late in the afternoon and high time for me to return home. The hotter the arguments against my boss grew, the more obstinate became my resolution to win. At last word was sent to an inner office, and there appeared before me a tall young man of about thirty, on whose athletic shoulders rested a rather small but finely molded head borne with the grace of an artistic temperament. At the sight of this gentleman, who now approached me with a somewhat assumed stern look, I felt reassured and, with an inspiration truly derived from the great mission I had undertaken, I dispelled all doubts in his mind relative to the worth of my employer. He had listened to me with an astonished smile, and now gave orders to forward the goods to our store.

It is beyond me to say how the druggist rewarded this act of the wholesaler. But as for me,—a few weeks thereafter we had an altercation about five dollars, the result of which was that, leaving my last week's wage with him, I packed my small belongings and walked out of the store.

And now that same man stood before me—an outcast, easily recognized by the degradation of his carriage, a shadow of the determination of yore, in which there was nothing determinable of the dignity of man.

I broke the silence.

"And what are you doing now?"

"Doing? H'm, not much more than the dead," he answered in a matter-of-fact way, "just come from the M—— Insane Asylum."

"Insane Asylum?" I stuttered in utter bewilderment.

"So you don't know about it? Yes, I am on leave of absence."

Was the man before me under the spell of a delusion or had the strain of work broken my mind?

But as if to assure me of the consciousness of the moment, the door opened and my bearded "boss" entered with the contented smile that a pleased palate always gave him. And the circumstance was revealed to me that both my former and present employers were blood relatives.

Fortunately, this was my day off.

Extremely interested in the history of his case, I asked our visitor to accompany me for dinner to a restaurant, and here, amid the silence of the afternoon,—it was nearly 1:45 when I left the store—perhaps for the first time and to the first man he rid himself of the torture of gloom that had wrecked his life.

I think I can repeat his story word for word, as every utterance is engraven on my mind.

* * * * *

"I am in full possession of my mental faculties, and was sane when they adjudged me a criminal insane for having attacked the proprietor of a Harlem drug store. I was not moved by jealousy, though I will admit that madness of a different sort rushed me onward to destruction. My love lived but in a vision, and the ever-recurring vision of a

mild and mourning girl kept my heart pure from any contamination with a passion for my worldly wife.

But let me begin with my youth. I loved my fellow-men, I dreamed of the happiness of the world. If there be such a thing, I was, by natural impulse, religious, and a deep devotion to the beauties and mysteries of nature carried me out, at all spare time, to the woods and fields of the country. The rustling of the leaves trembled forth in my breast, the silver-tongue of the brook sang to my ear, and the sky above the trees sent in passing clouds soft promises to my mind.

Then I had to go to work, and I chose the drug store. The odor of the drugs, the colors of the fluids, the self-denial of the pharmacist, the sacredness of his calling, lured me into the fold of a profession that enslaves men in the same proportion as they become masters in their arts.

On my day-off I rode out to the silent Bronx Park where a creaky rustic bridge led me to an immovable little lake. Alongside a pathway made by the footsteps of going and coming workmen I lay and passed the afternoon reading and listening and dreaming, until the glowworms danced merrily around me, and the whole countryside with the whistling of a distant train and the barking of a lone dog bid me good-bye.

But soon, and altogether too soon for the peace of my heart and the bliss of my life, my ways took a cruel turn.

After I had passed my examinations at the College, I spent some time of my free evenings at lecture halls and public meetings. Once a young woman with a serious eye, a distinct profile, a blonde curl on her temple, whose blue dress beautified her

white and rosy face even as a white cloudlet surrounded by a deep blue sky is shrouded by pink rays at dawn, once at a public meeting this young woman placed in my hands a circular and added a few words of invitation to a political meeting. Whether it was the blue and hopeful eye or the melodious and sincere voice that enchanted me, I cannot tell. A tremble ran through my body; and, as my shaking hand returned the paper and my quivering lip refused the invitation, I noticed a bundle of hand-bills sliding out of her grasp and tottering to a chair.

"Your reasons are strange," she admitted. "I never heard such reasoning before. Will you take me to the car and explain your way of thinking to me?"

We went out. The gist of my logic interrupted by the vehemence of my emotions was this: "Politics means partisanship. Party-assaults and party-hatred are poisons with which we destroy good feeling in the body of the community. All our sufferings for the attainment of universal brotherhood are intensified by the intrigues of party-strife, and liberty is suffocated in the air of their calumnies."

As we parted she gave me a card and extracted from me a promise to correspond. A mournful look, and I was alone. I never wrote, for on showing the card to my boss I was told that Alice,—this was her surname—according to the address, must be a member of an aristocratic family in Newark and one of the few zealous settlement workers in the neighborhood. Knowing as I did the depth and thoroughness of my sentiment, I decided to stifle the growth of love ere it had taken firm root in my heart. I never saw her again.

* * * * *

But to obliterate her memory that frequently, at work and at leisure, rose before me, I sought the companionship of another woman. It was a girl with a self-contented smile, such as you meet daily at the counter, and which one takes for good-natured innocence, though it be nothing better than the conventional mask for thoughtlessness.

In short, before I knew why, I found myself walking at her side amid the crowds of the shore-resorts. I should have preferred to stroll among my friends in the quiet forest, but somehow I was led away by the guile of an inexplicable infatuation for a woman I had never had the time and opportunity to intimately acquaint myself with. And before I had learned anything of her moods and longings, her mother had proposed that I marry the girl. And I did marry her.

On the morning following our wedding-day, when I rose at half past six to go to work, my first look fell on my trunk that until now had contained all the treasures I possessed. I don't know what prompted me to investigate, but a strange fear of an impending loss moved me to open the trunk and look my treasures over. My books collected with painstaking tenderness had been removed and a lot of rubbish, such as papers, pieces of cloth, thrown in. With faltering hands I searched for a small powder-box. In vain.

"Where are my books?" I asked, excitedly.

My wife was in the kitchen, which adjoined our bedroom.

"Under the sofa in the parlor," she retorted, "I am going to take the trunk to the cellar, and I don't see where else I could put that truck."

Truck! My books, the most cherished possession I owned—truck!

"Didn't you see a small box with a pink silk ribbon?" I asked with alarm.

"Sure I did," she confessed leisurely, as she put the coffee on the table. "I opened it and found nothing but a card with a woman's name on it."

"And what did you do with it?"

"What did I do with it? H'm, I threw it out, of course, box and all."

I dropped into a chair. The only remembrance of her, my Alice, gone! And all at once, with unmerciful knock, the memory of our meeting rose before me, reminding me of the fatal step I had taken in marrying a woman not of my wooing and mating, and all happiness, all beauty, all promise, all life seemed to sink out of my reach.

* * * * *

Our service demands not our partial attention but the sacrifice of our personality. Every moment is hers, every faculty at her command, every fibre of her making. If you have chosen to follow her, don't attempt to deviate from the course she prescribes. If you elect to wait on her don't wince at the harassing of the ignorant.

Marrying, young man, should effect the climax in the intimacy of two souls. What right has a man to marry, who has no opportunity to join a kindred spirit?

My wife was quarrelling with me for my lack of attention and understanding. The long hours of my enforced absence and the dreary silence of our misplaced association were equally well chosen to augment our misery.

Then came a child, a curly headed boy. Whipped by a desire to straighten and soften his path, I worked incessantly, though tired and worn out, and after three years I opened a small store, buying the

fixtures and some other outfit on the instalment plan.

In all my struggle I was alone. My longings I could confide to nobody. Was I to die for want of the comradeship of nature and man? Aye, long since I had realized that, while I slept under one roof with a woman, my heart was untouched, and all the more I detested myself for degrading my soul with a union unwholesome and unholy. There I stood between two iron doors, not strong and resolute enough to force either of them. Here was my occupation holding me in its grip all hours of the day; and there was my wife chaining me through the love of my child to a baneful situation. And vacillating as I stood between an ideal of truth and a reality of lie, there was not a soul to reach out a soothing hand to the agonies of my despair, and Fate with heart unmoved and teeth clinched had even closed to me the door of Public Spirit open to the distraction of the lowliest toiler in the land. My wife became the more estranged from me the longer we remained under one roof. And while I grew paler and weaker, she fattened on her mechanical work and gossiping. My lack of contentment she ascribed to a lack of appetite for food. That my soul was hungry, that I was starving for want of communion with the spirit of life amid this drudge of toil, I could not undertake to explain to her; for to people of routine all mental agony is the result of culpability. What wonder, then, that reporters and judges explained my murderous attack with the easy refuge to the elementary broils of jealousy?

I pondered over a means of escape from this dilemma, from these mute four walls, into the rejuvenating stream of life. Money alone could secure me a temporary independence from this stifling

environment. Money. That was the means and it became my goal! Forget all and everything for a while, blind your mind to the sun and the flower, to pain and pleasure, to the past and the future, breathe the present into money. These mists of troublous thoughts lured my mind to madness and lulled my senses to stupor. Money meant harshness and brought misery at the awakening.

I took up the fight with the Broadway merchants. A small buyer, I sold the cut articles below cost to me. The deeper I went into the struggle, the higher rose my debts. The less able I was to meet my notes promptly, the less apt was I to succeed in replenishing my stock. At last a manufacturer whose output I sold below cost refused to sell me goods and warned my wholesaler against me, who, in his turn and for good reasons, discontinued my credit. Lacking the experience and association that enable the big merchant to obtain goods refused him by a manufacturer, through secret channels, I lost considerable trade. Just then, utterly exhausted, I decided to get help. I hired you simply because you stood at the door even before I opened the store that morning. I cared for you at that moment as little as I cared for anybody else,—excepting my child. Anybody else was my enemy who stood between me and my goal. To me you were a piece of the store's outfit that cost me so much a week. I never gave a thought to the questionable comfort you received from your nightly lodgings near the hydrant in the narrow stockroom. The only time my mind reverted to you as a person was when on balancing my book I found that you were a drainage on my resources.

Then my wife decided to move from the quarters in the rear of the store. In a way I welcomed her

decision. This partial separation would free me from her unbearable presence. Her fool questions and pointless gossip would not interrupt my meditation or reading. I would eat my meals alone and should not have to sit at the table with her, when at every glance her face seemed to me a distorted grimace,—her eyes swimming in an aimless pool, her mouth drawn to a thoughtless grin, her cheeks swollen to a flabby mundanity,—in short, an ugly sensuality munching away on idle matter. Yet, the greater expense deterred me. We had a few words. Since it was not my custom to speak much, my wife gave me what they call a tongue-lashing, and won her point. Someone there had to be, upon whom without further damage to the peace of the house I could unloosen the fury of my nerves, born of loneliness and weariness. That someone happened to be you; it might have been a cat had I had one in my possession. I offended you. You left me.

The gap in my existence widened and my troubles increased. I could not fight Broadway successfully and sold the store. Much as I should have desired to run out into the arms of the patient country-hills, to cry out my tormenting despair on the bosom of listful Nature, much as I knew that my cries would be stilled and my heart soothed,—the voice that called me away from my environment was hushed by another voice that lovingly clung to his father's ear.

I shall talk later of this boy—my hopes, my pride in him.

* * * * *

I took a position as clerk uptown. Correspondingly, we moved into a tenement-house. The foul tongues of my neighbors kept the midnight hour lively with curses and turmoil. Since I neither gambled with them nor sat at pints with them, it was a

matter of common gossip that I was a fiend. And it did not escape my notice that the women and men, who, at my appearance, scattered from our rooms, pitied my wife for the kind of husband she had.

Here and there, when utterly exhausted, I left a job to recuperate my strength with a week or two at reading books and taking exercise in the Park. At such intervals only could I pay any attention to my boy; as he hung on my arm, while sitting or walking, he repeatedly patted my hands and echoed, "I am so lonesome, pap!" And every time he uttered this childish plaint, the true meaning of this reproach pierced my heart. Well I knew that he was left alone, that his mother was not a mother born, with the intuition of entering a child's moods and following a child's wanderings. Well I knew that the cruelty of my service forced my absence from his mind and companionship. "I am so lonesome, father!" The wail of the only child! Fate fastening the web of melancholia around the promising faculties of searching senses! Affection, deep-rooted and wide branched, thirsting for supply and object!

* * * * *

With years passing through this worry and grind and rush, I finally became a prey to the tortures of sleepless nights. Resorting to trional in periodically increased doses, I for a short while succeeded in gaining a few hours' sleep. At last the drug failed to work its charm, and, try as I may, I could not find any invigorating sleep. I left my bed, I walked the room, I read; I threw myself flat on the mattress, covering my face with the pillow, pressing my arms heavily onto my chest; I counted, counted, counted. Despite the stifling heat, my perception grew steadily clearer, the least sign of drowsiness vanished with the rising gray of the morning. Every stroke of the

clock alarmed my fear of the next day. Then ghastly silhouettes danced mockingly before my closed lids. Hearses, monsters, deceased,—weeping mothers, helpless children, mourning fathers,—amid a silence, deadly, threatening, like an assassin, feared and unseen.

Then I began, like my comrades in profession and solitude, to wander through the streets and cafés after a day's work was done.

It was well enough to drag through the slovenliness of the winter and the languor of the summer. But lo! when spring came, and all things were pregnant with blossoms, and the air was humid and soft like the sunkissed dew of the morning; when the spring came, and a sighing, yearning unrest magnetized, as it were, my body into the sighing and yearning crowd of the night, and my spirit was electrified, as it were, by the spirited words and actions of the multitude thronging the cafés and seeking, in spite of all pains of disappointment, seeking for somebody or something to fill the gaps in their lives, sending their mellow eyes through the noisy atmosphere far, far away for a quiet little corner of happiness. Perhaps, like me, they found it not, and, like me, unapproachable and distrustful, they were ground unto death for want of spiritual communion with a living and loving mate. Girls I saw, and from under painted smiles looked a painfully hidden world of sadness and expectedness. Laughter I heard from their lips, and the trembling of their lone hearts shook a responding echo in my breast.

"A good man who loves you," whispered one woman to her friend, "is a real blessing—in a way," she added, with a sigh at noticing the thoughtful silence of the other girl.

In a way! Yes, because we have been thrown asun-

der and do not trust one another without retaining the memory of past experiences. Lone men and women, we go out at night and lift not our eyes to either stars or clouds, and wander in mute discontent through the sombre streets, and all our thoughts are with the dark past of weary days. But at the bottom of all these battered souls lie the broken idols of their imagination. Our imagination must have a range for expansion. If it cannot expand in the beauties of nature, it seeks the artifice of imitation, and, if not finding it there, intoxicates itself on the freaks of dissipation. Dreams have been the only joy of many a soul, night and day. And what wonder if those whose powers of imagination are not strong enough to resist the deadly onslaughts of a corroding reality, seize upon drugs or other artificial means to bring a little sunshine into their lives?

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Such dreams of success, adventure, gratification of all sorts came to me when, undisturbed, I was allowed to clean and wipe the multi-colored rows of shelve bottles. Amid the glistening glimmer of the glass or the sparkling lustre of the liquids or the manual dexterity of my movements,—soon my imagination had carried me away from the drudge of the day into fields strewn with promise and roses.

From the time that I had again become a clerk, money was no longer my goal. My heart again, as in younger days, opened like a spring of purity to my surroundings. The fate of the sick child whose medicine I compounded, the mother whose story of want I heard, the countenance of the man who sat gloomily waiting for relief,—my sympathy went out to their troubles as if they were parts of my own self.

But so much the worse for me. So much the more

I despised the coarse insensibility among which I had to live. So much less had the world to offer me of diversions and companionship. And the greater the chasm grew between me and the world without, so much greater grew the dissatisfaction with myself and so much deeper my desire for reconstruction.

Something had to be done. And as the spring was awakening to fertile life the soil in the Park, it likewise enchanted my faculties. Feeble and enervated though I was, a new aspiration pulsated through my body. I was going to try my luck at something else, something that would give me air and leisure and compassion. I tried this, that and th' other, but soon found that the trade I had followed well nigh fourteen years incapacitated me for anything else and followed me now with scrupulous questions into every venture. I longed for the grave speculations at the prescription counter and the fascinating imaginings at the shelves with the variegated bottles. All my dread was forgotten as though a magic hand had blotted the fiendishness of the past from my memory.

I could have returned to my last position in a drugstore. But I looked for a situation with shorter hours and accepted one, although I forfeited my day off, or rather afternoon off. And soon I found that missing this afternoon I missed the chance of resting in the sunshine. Every time I looked out to the children on the sidewalk, calling and warbling like the birds in the forest, every time I espied a piece of the blue sky breaking through the corners of the block, rebellion anew burst forth from my breast. The sun flooded the streets with joyous light. Festively clothed in silvery array the buildings rose into the clear azure blue sky. A mild breeze played with

the flaps of the awnings and a white cloudlet, like a flag of truce, passed greeting by.

I decided to return to my old position. But before I was to go behind that prescription-counter, I resolved to breathe for one long day the pure air of the country and rest my mind on the soft tranquillity of its splendor. So I jumped one morning on the next best train going out, and after a ride of three hours alighted on a forsaken spot in the mountains. Nearby I heard what seemed a rolling thunder vibrating through the air, which sound I well knew came from wagons and footsteps crossing the bridges that connected the hillsides. Yonder, hidden between clumps of bushes and trees, peacefully like friendly neighbors, lay the houses of the village, at the extreme end of which protruded the steaming smokestacks of one or two sawmills. Farther on my gaze strolled on the velvety valley of corn and potato fields surrounded by a snow-white sheen of daisies.

Not far from the deserted and decrepid station I threw myself under the shadow of a couple of wide-branched maple-trees. Watching the woodpeckers picking at the bark and robins pegging in the grass, I became entirely forgetful of the discontent in my heart and gave myself away to the charm of life. I fell into a drowsy stupor; while conscious of the warmth and color and multiformity about me, I was unconscious of the analytical powers within me.

Presently I seemed to be spoken to by a maiden with a kindly look in her eyes, with a salutary inspiration in her mien, with a loving tenderness in her voice that, withal, I recognized in her the love I secreted in my bosom so many years.

"Here!" she said, "behold the fields of various hue, the rolling hills, the rising mountains, the fer-

tile valley, the telling brooks, the happy birds, the cooling woods! Roam in the health of the green, dream in the distance of the blue. It is yours. It is Life. Enjoy it."

As I listened in sweet repose, suddenly a woman with a vulgar face, an angry eye, a hoarse voice, took the maiden's place and spoke contemptibly.

"You are mine. You cannot return here any more. I have tainted you with my poison. Look farther beyond the hills and perceive her, the City, with her locks in pearls and her girdle of gold, the lust in her heart and the laughter on her lips. She calls you and you cannot resist her. I give you potions for peace, for I am grappling, surging, agonizing Death."

And a flaming sword took the place of that apparition and pointed to the East where the ocean was beckoning, and a voice directed me: "Go!"

I rose to my feet. I saw a few persons slowly coming up to the station, with satchels in hands, and looking toward the snorting and wheezing train approaching us.

As it was early in the afternoon and another train was due toward evening I remained, and, passing over the bridge with steps resounding a welcoming echo to the mountain range, I descended to the street in the village to purchase a drink and a few sandwiches. The saloon-keeper handed me the glass of beer with a kindly interest that seemed even to be reluctant about accepting the coin in exchange. I could feel, when departing from his place, his curious and friendly eye following me to the street. Near the bridge I met a smooth-faced young man whose "lovely day!" in passing thrilled me still more with its hearty simplicity.

Returned to the shadowy camp under the maples,

I lay down and beheld the rising landscape about me. A wonderful impression mystified my senses with the pleasantry of changing shades of light. Quicker than my eyes could follow, the shadow fleeing down the mountain covered the valleys, again, as the playful clouds unveiled the sun, to be chased by the eager spread of flooding light. The blue unfathomable bell under whose maple pendulum I sat adoring, like a calm sea embraced by loving chains and crossed by cloudy birds and animals of varying forms, was not even disturbed by the menace of a floating hawk. Grayish-blue hills in the distant nebula, like gray clouds broken up by valleys of rosy-yellow meadows, courted with the firmament. And like a thoughtful head of an ancient philosopher the mountain top before me impressed me with its high forehead and wool-like adornment.

Thus the hours passed in pleasure beyond description, and ere I knew it the time had come for me to return home.

In the soft pillows of the car I slumbered for quite a while, and when I awoke we were traveling through the dark country along the shore of the Hudson. On the opposite bank a train raced along with us. Like a wild woman in dread of driving furies, a stream of white hair floating through the wind, the train hurried onward to hide in the cave of a tunnel and disappear, and again, shrieking madly, to appear with dishevelled hair enveloping her head. As our train was rocked to and fro, its light rested here and there upon a strange figure in the sky. The longer my eye gazed upon that picture, the surer the reflection resembled a man playing ball with his own head.

A gruesome spectacle. Yet many a man is beheading himself with the inconsistency of an un-

truthful life. And the nearer I came to my home the more I was convinced of the truth of that omen.

* * * * *

However I pitied my wife and reproached myself for the eventful step in marrying her and despoiling three lives, there always sprang up new reasons to estrange us and to supplant my remorse and sympathy with scorn and hate.

The next day following my trip to the country being the last before entering my position, I busied myself with removing to the cellar all unnecessary junk that had accumulated during years of neglectful toleration. My eyes, accustomed to espying every speck of dust, were met with the offence of trinkets thrown about in disorder and covered with the dust of months.

But what was sadder than all that was the infection that such disorder had wrought on the boy. He was just as careless with his books and playthings, though in imitation of my habit he had quite a collection of clippings from song-books and of drawings either by himself or from cuts. My wife's neglect in carriage and language was also transferred to him. As though unable to lead her thoughts—which was really at first carelessness, then negligence, at last habit—she looked about in the middle of a sentence and stutteringly concluded or abruptly finished, leaving to the listener's mind to scintillate the meaning. My boy soon formed the same negligent habit of a forcibly disordered mind. And so baneful is the influence of negligence that even I detected myself, at times, to stray amidst the expression of ideas and, more so, in the effusion of sentiments.

But there was hope. He loved drawing, and his occasional drawings from impressions on his memory

convinced me that the logical succession of eventuality would express itself through this passion. To nurture it I supplied him with books from which he could study his loved art, and his vivid imagination soon stocked drawers of his little desk with leaves and books marked with the pictured pastimes and ideas of childhood.

But even that hope was taken from me. His teacher detected him drawing dreamily on a sheet of paper during the arithmetic lesson which he disliked, and, consequently, was defective in. To punish him she made him copy his arithmetic during the hours the other pupils were engaged with drawing. This lasted two weeks. At the end of that period the discipline had worked so well that the boy detested drawing and never since could be persuaded to resume his once all absorbing pastime.

The home had no charm for him any longer. He joined the boys on the street. Neither words of anger nor promises of reward could keep him in the house. As much as he feared his teacher he disliked the lessons. Bad reports kept coming in. The boy wept and promised to do better. Once or twice my wife, enraged by requested visits to the teacher, had chastised the child,—with the only reward to increase his stubborn hatred. But I knew there was in him tenderness, sweetness, loftiness, when on my day off he would cling to my side and with a far look and a sigh mumble: "Father, I am so lonesome!"

During the interval of my engagement in other than the drug business we formed a close and happy companionship. I helped him at his lessons, smoothed his ill-temper with boyish intimacy, and soon he was at the head of his class; whereas a month before he was classed among the backward

children, he now was adjudged a promising scholar. Not the least of the causes actuating me to return to the mill of clerking was my inability to earn a livelihood at anything else to permit of the expenses and saving I had in mind for the boy's future.

My own ambitions I resolved to choke and bury for his advancement and advantage. I felt sure that his love for drawing would awaken after a while of slumber with greater passion. But before I could fathom it, the spoliation of former days had damned us to perdition.

Soon during the evenings when I was at work he again became part and parcel of the street. On the corner, opposite our home, there was a poolroom to which children were attracted by the noise of loitering gangs. All boys are attracted by noise and all girls by secrecy. The emaciated, bloodless youths with the hungry and sleepless look and the thin and tattered clothes crouched at the doorway of the poolroom, surveying the rows of buildings within their peering sight and ejaculating a filthy remark at every woman, young and old, passing on the sidewalk.

One evening when I came home for supper I found my wife in tears. I had missed my boy at the stoop where he had been always waiting for me. Fear of something unspeakable terrorized my heart and paralyzed my tongue. Mute and submissive as though silence would keep the murderous truth from me, I sat down at the cheerless table. Needless to say, the food I carried to my mouth was not touched by my lips.

I looked up. My wife was not in the room. I turned round. There she sat in the kitchen behind me, sobbing into her apron.

With trembling legs I dragged myself into her presence. "What happened to Charlie?" I asked.

No answer. Instead, she burst out into a hysterical cry that took all self-control out of me. I sank into a chair unable to either think or move.

The bell rang. Someone knocked. Fearful of the result at opening the door I remained silent and motionless.

A harder knock.

"Papa, please, Papa!"

My boy's voice, my darling's sweet, honest, convincing voice! At a moment's instance he was in my arms, looking up to me with his full true eyes swollen from tears.

"Oh, Papa, God's honest truth, I never did it. The fellows on the corner all put it up to me, and the woman from whom the boys took the pocketbook had me arrested. They wuz all running away, and somebody got a hold of me and held me till the woman come up and let the cop take me to the station. Then after I been there for a long, long time, another cop brings in a big fellow, and then the woman comes in again and said that it was a mistake and that the pocketbook the big fellow had was hers. A kind man was there who spoke for me when they brought me over to a judge and who took me home afterwards, but he didn't want to come up and didn't tell me who he was."

* * * * *

In spite of this lucky outcome, which by a trifle may have meant an unmendable calamity, I was broken down as though a sledge-hammer had knocked all grit out of my brains. As much as I had loved life before, yea, had adored it and longed with every fibre of my yearning for life's bountiful

unfolding, just as much, yea more than that, I perceived disgust covering every aspect of life.

Here was a child. Born into this world with sentiments of love, issued as school-child into the care of indifference, thrown as toiler into the mercy of profit, either losing, one by one, his devotion to the beautiful, his sweetness of conception, his trust in the noble, and dying of despairing loneliness, or gaining, in quick rotation, by the poison of spite, by the flattery of lie, by the profit of corruption, and living on the despairng loneliness of his victims. Such is life. And yet have we, the makers of society, nothing in our possession to make life beautiful and pure and pleasurable for these children, that we rear them in the dust of our gutters, under the wheels on the macadam and before the pallid debauchees of the children of sorrow? Oh, my child, that the love of your parents, and be it the divine love of the universal love in one, cannot take you in arms and flee with you to the remotest end of the world, to keep your birthright pure and intact! That we cannot keep your sweet and soft smile from the lash of discipline! That the haggard furrows of worry must be drawn so early by the maze of chiding voices!

Why is that child but an instrument for the building of other instruments? And the other instruments are there for no purpose of their own, but to serve the manipulators in their haste for gain.

On every side an interested maxim claims them as their own. "To those belong the future who have the children." I say, this is the ulterior motive of rascals. Youth belongs to itself. Youth has a right of its own. And to Youth belongs the future of its own selection. We have no right to model

Youth according to our dogmas and for our purposes.

Our dogmas are narrow, since they vary with caste and creed, and our purposes are base, for they are selfish and forcible. Youth must laugh and love; learn at play and enjoy its livng.

What awaited my child? As I witnessed the degrading influence of gluttony and inhumanity pervading all classes of society, and the menacing rise in our midst of an aristocracy with the prototype of the oldest enslaving civilization, the Chinese, I saw it all end in unnerved degeneracy and suffocate to death in a joyless land. With nature's impressions barred, with youth's self-development effaced, with the adults' virilty dispirited, what but degeneracy, hopeless and unnerved, could follow?

And of all the sins this is the greatest: to deny the children the twittering noise of sparrows, and youths the dreamy joys of larks.

What awaited my child? The city's smouldering discontent for which he was unfitted, since he had no opportunity in his early life to become infatuated with life itself? The battle for existence in which his sentimental and honest nature must become an object of sacrifice?

After all, was it not the wisest thing for me to do if I made an end of this torture? With me out of the way, mother and son, relying on their own resources, would, of necessity, gain strength within themselves.

And what awaited me? Did I not, at idle moments, find my senses stray without desire and hope through the sands of Time's desert? Did I not, at close examinations, perceive the decaying of my faculties? Did I not, with hustled breath, carry a carcass of dead and unburied hopes with me?

But before I had quite resolved upon my fate, I fell sick. Indications had not been lacking to warn me of my approaching collapse. So weak had I become from sleepless nights, forcefully centred attention, overstrained physical exhaustion, that upon reaching home for dinner or supper I but slightly partook of my meals and spent a remaining twenty or thirty minutes in a half drowsy, half sleeping condition on the couch. Yet I had not been aware of the seriousness of my malady until one night I awoke with a parched tongue and burning thirst. As upon my repeated calls for water I received no answer from my wife, I dragged myself to the kitchen for water. Returning, I found my curly-headed boy alone in the bedroom, soundly asleep. With a wild passion, inexplicable as is the raving of a maniac, I buried my murderous fingers in his locks, ready to smash his beloved head on the wall.

He turned in his sleep, smiling pleasantly. Withdrawing my hands, fully awakened for a second, I returned to my bed and lost consciousness. As I learned later, my wife, alarmed at my incoherent mutterings and rising fever, had run out in search of a physician.

Unconscious though I was, the undercurrent of responsibility that had become flesh and blood with me, reasoned consciously in me. And as I saw the soft lines of a young man dying at the foot-end of my bed and a weeping mother bent over him—the prospect of life stricken before the age of fulfilment—my heart grew strong with a desire to live, to live for those who must perish without me. And once and again, in seeming delusion, I cried out "O Anna, what will you and the child do without me?"

The doctors were unable to understand how so emaciated a body could contain so firm a heart that

it was not necessary, aside from a little brandy and milk to serve as food, to resort to strychnine to sustain the circulation; they were nonplussed to see me dying of pleuro-pneumonia with a heart beating regularly to the end.

* * * * *

As you see, I outwitted both death and the doctors, but not the eventuality of life.

I had not time enough to fully regain my health and strength. My employer notified me that he could not much longer hold open the position for me. Had I not been so popular a man with the children and women who never could have realized that behind my jocular chats lie a painful misery, and had my resourcefulness for advertising and promoting of business, gained by observation and acknowledged by all my employers, easily been replaced, I, like most of my comrades in misfortune, should have lost that position the first morning I failed to report for work. Besides, there was no money in the house. Needless to say, I had not received any salary during my illness, save a couple of dollars due me for a day's work after the expiration of my week. Luckily, the physicians, one of them a friend of mine, the other a mere acquaintance, would not accept either payment or promises.

So, although hardly able to walk, I began to struggle anew. And a struggle it was that would break down a man of unparalleled health. Unmindful of my convalescent condition, the boss absented himself from the store sometimes for eight hours successively, thus depriving me not only of an uninterrupted meal but of an hour's respite. As he continually was scrapping with his clerks—and drug clerks are irritable and engage in scraps at any provocation,—we continually harbored new help

who never became familiar with the stock or trade and could, of course, not be left alone.

My boss, in partnership with two other men, owned a chain of three stores and was, at that time, supervising the construction of a fourth. Himself a victim of nervousness, he would not heed the advice of common sense, and plunged forever deeper and wider in his grasp of aggrandizing possibilities.

During the lucid hours of my illness I had learned to regard my wife with a truer understanding. Under directions she was—I saw it—developing untiring devotion, without complaint. I pitied her for a life without sympathy, and the image in my heart, that I had in silence adored so many years and before which I knelt, as it were, in worship, I resolved to tear out from my memory and replace it with hers. Alas, it was too late!

The doctor, my friend, in his tranquil way, had aroused her fear of my impending new break-down, and she, unable to dissuade me from my connection with the store, acting on the advice of our friend, came one day to argue for shorter hours with my boss.

* * * * *

It was late in spring.

There was nothing extraordinary in the routine of that day, except, perhaps, in the fact that I had to shield a terrified peddler, who had taken refuge in our store, from a horde of savage boys who had broken his ware of mantles and globes. But that was a spectacle of such frequent occurrence that fighting and remonstrating with ever growing ruffianism was almost becoming an addition to the routine of business. In the pile of work this was soon forgotten.

But pharmacists are accustomed to think with almost unfailing velocity and work at various manipu-

lations at almost the same time, as though guided by an intuitive sense of touch yet unexplained. Who will unriddle satisfactorily the phenomena that at a guess fills his hand with a desired number of pills from a bulk, or places in his fingers a needed amount of powder-sheets from a pocket? Now this is almost invariably the case with the "experienced" pharmacist as is also his ability to account for every act during his frequent interruptions, although his actions and interruptions very often change every few seconds. Moreover, his alertness grows with the variety of his task; the mere prescription-clerk becomes a dull-minded fob.

This you know. You will, therefore, understand how I succeeded so well, how, irrespective and unconscious of fatigue, I was constantly at a jump between the sales-counter and the prescription department, from the laggard old porter to the anxious new junior, smiling with the friendly old lady and bowing to the presumptuous rich "stiff."

Mr. Spur, our employer, appeared a little before noon. With matted hair like the bristles of a boar, his head bent, the compact little body moving swiftly through the store to the rear, he looked every bit as though ready to drive his contracted brow through some one. He bit his finger-nails as he inaudibly bid us a good morning.

We were all uneasy. He would pick a quarrel, surely. The nostrils of a young graduate, who just then held up to me the morphium-bottle and a weighed amount, moved excitedly.

"You had a dispute with Mrs. X——?" Mr. Spur addressed the latter in his wonted subdued tone.

"She called me a liar," responded he with vim, "because I denied her allegation that I had given her a wrong article."

"I can't use men who quarrel. You may look for another job."

Then he turned to another man. He mustered a bulk of pills just rolled out and felt one:

"They are not hard enough."

"They will get harder, they are iron-pills," answered this one, a cool bachelor of forty, unconcernedly, although visibly offended in his pride as pill-maker.

Mr. Spur picked up a pill and threw it upon the table.

"It bounced once," he concluded, triumphantly. "A good pill should bounce twice."

He now entered the adjoining laboratory where I was inspecting the filtrate of a preparation.

"It don't run fast enough. I want to show you how to prepare a filter right."

I boiled with indignation. There he sent a good clerk away who, like me, had been in a hurry to marry, for the false witness a nag had borne against him, destroyed another man's pleasure in his work with his spirit of vindictiveness, and now proceeds to lecture me on a worn-out topic without first examining the contents in the filter.

"One of the first rules in making a filter," he began, solemnly, "is to divide as little as possible the linen-fiber"——

But I had no time to listen to him since the bell vigorously called me to the store. When I returned, he poured the mixture into a new filter.

"Your filter was stuck too deep into the neck of the funnel. Put the paper lightly onto it. If you'd only use a milligram of foresight——" he finished, abruptly.

We watched. His filter was a failure. The drops followed in long intervals.

He bit his finger-nails.

"It's the magma," he philosophized. "I see it now."

Some of our help went out for dinner. I got busy at prescriptions.

"Here, now!" I heard Mr. Spur exclaim at the junior, "let me show you how to handle a five-gallon bottle. More axle-grease, or you'll never dissolve that sugar."

Bump! A crack—a crash—a smash! In his endeavor to show how axle-grease is used he had hit the bottle against the sink, and the syrupy mass and the mocking shivers covered floor and boss.

"A milligram of foresight!" added the undaunted bachelor aloud while I checked his prescription.

Two telephone bells rang. We were glad of the interruption at this opportune time.

The soda clerk was waiting with a complaint when I resumed my work at the desk. He had some trouble with the carbonizer in the cellar. So after I had finished my prescription and had copied a recipe just taken over the wire from a physician, I seized some tools and departed for the cellar.

* * * * *

Twice during the half hour I spent there I was called up to help in the store, and when my repair work was finally done and I had climbed up a third time the steep and narrow stairs behind the sales-counter, I felt keenly the overstrain and exhaustion. Deciding on a little nux vomica as a stimulus, I took the bottle from the shelf on the prescription desk, when I was surprised to hear the voice of my wife whispering in a side-room. I listened. Now it was Mr. Spur's hushed words that persuasively addressed the visitor.

The bachelor-clerk left for dinner.

"Nothing but dissimulation and obduracy, this talk

of long hours and nervous strain. Now let me tell you, madam, that it is, in general, a benefit to the clerks to have such hours." (On the desk before me steadily new recipes were thrown. I let go of the nux vomica bottle and clutched the heavy iron-plier, I had in my hand, firmly in my grasp). "Clerks would not know what to do intelligently with so much idle time at their disposal. To keep them out of mischief, to prevent them from dissipation, there is nothing you may so safely rely on than long hours and steady work. Don't you think I know what I am talking about?'

"Surely, eh, eh,—you ought to—" my wife acquiesced in her accustomed unintelligible way.

"It's for the best of everybody concerned that things are left the way we've found them. Only about five years ago the drug clerks stirred up a lot of trouble and started a-pounding the proprietors, until it became necessary to muzzle them in a decent manner as becomes sound morals and respectable business. So a law was passed to make ten hours the legal workday of the pharmacist. But you can't beat the lawyers, and, naturally, they framed a law for us that, like every other law, could be read backward, and, thus, would not prohibit a clerk from working fourteen or sixteen hours a day. My clerks work only twelve hours a day, except, of course, when there is an occasional shortage of help. At any rate, it doesn't give them a chance to fall to the level of the common workingmen. No, we'll never have our profession marred. Thank God, we can take care of the drug business. Don't you think now it's for the best?"

"Ye-es, I believe,—for the best," she answered, seemingly convinced.

I heard her leave the chair. At this moment a

strange feeling of superiority flowed through my veins, an unknown vigor pulsated through my passionated soul. With a determined gait, my figure straightened up to its long-since abandoned proud carriage, the muscles in my face resolved to a supreme effort, I reached their room and called out:

"Apologize!"

The proprietor, pale and crestfallen, retreated in silence.

"Apologize!" I demanded threateningly.

Mr. Spur had sufficiently recovered to begin the pacifying tactics of the coward.

"Why?" said he with a bland smile, "I didn't say anything out of the way. You've simply misconstrued my words."

My wife laid her hand on my left arm.

"Mr Spur didn't insult me, Charlie. What's the matter with you?"

I freed myself from her. Life appeared to me immeasurably detestable, loathsome. Every muscle in my body was an electric spring, every nerve glowed with the fire of destruction. And before me rose the vision of a woman, determined yet gentle, sweet yet serious, who laughed to scorn the self-sufficiency of my wife.

Maddened with the sufferings of tortured years, I raised my right arm and flung the deadly iron into the face of the cowering benefactor.

A shriek—a fall—a stream of blood.

A bustling from hurrying feet.

Then the bells of the ambulance, the patrol wagon; the jail, the court.

My wife appeared as the strongest witness against me, involuntarily, I am sure. But I am thankful to her and to everybody who regarded my act as the result of jealousy and insanity. It gave me peace;

and all I wish is to remain to the end of my life within the walls of the M—— Insane Asylum, where all hope is at rest and the soul free to wander.

Mr. Spur recovered fully, with but a scar in the face.

So well have my wife's people taken care of my family that since my incarceration I have not heard even of my beloved son.

But at parting, my friend, let me give you an advice.

There lives in the breast of many a man the ideal of a perfect woman whom it has not been his good fortune to meet. And forever there gnaws on the heart of many another man the memory of a noble woman whom, though met, he has failed to hold. But the reverence of the noble woman is the bliss of life to those who remain faithful to her noble memory—which I did not.

Grim visages of intolerance are looming out of the dark paths of dark ages, ready to grapple with the bright youth ascending to the sunny heights of revealing happiness. Time calls for a new celibacy to devote itself to the service of the beautiful and the noble. Revere the woman, noble and beautiful, and at her shrine your purposes will grow larger and your principles wiser.

CHAPTER IV.

When the picnickers returned that evening after hearing "The Wreck's Message," the clear moonshine glittered over the trembling waves of the lake, and through the silhouetted trees along the hidden streamlet its light broke innumerable windowlets and passages for the circling breeze. They found the house deserted, but from the dark depth of the orchard reached them the voice of Bro. Cal, as he, with the affirmation of his Marion, was repeating the oft-heard adventure with an old-time bear almost as daring as Bro. Cal himself in his young days.

"All it onzt, without 'spectin' him, the beast stood afore me. I hadn't no time to lose, and biff! he got it right straight in the heart. 'Twuz the biggest brute ye ever laid yer eyes on, an' the skin went to John."

Of course, by this time everybody had learned who John was.

"That happened on yonder hill," Cal pointed in a westerly direction, where everyone knew the densest forests on the highest altitude to be, but which none save the eye of that old Nimrod could locate at present.

"Weren't you afraid?" asked the Doctor's timid sister-in-law.

"Afeard?"

Cal had hardly repeated the word when suddenly the Armenian girls, rising in terror, shrieked at the top of their voices:

"A bear! A bear!"

A convulsion of terror seized the group in the orchard.

"Bear! Bear!" yelled the girl's mother, and limped, assisted by her husband, toward the rear of the house.

A thick-set animal emerged from the bushes on the railroad-track, hurried past the panic-stricken women and scurried, confused and frightened by the shrill yells, over the cabbage-patch and through cornstacks to the street.

As though fearing lest it may reconsider its chances and, thereupon, reappear on the scene, the two sisters, the Doctor's wife and sister-in-law, as also Mrs. Ross, ran after the shaggy animal and hid in the safe recesses of the house, where the men, alarmed at the shrieks, met them horror-stricken and in vain asked for an explanation of this sudden uproar. Someone lit the lamp in the sitting-room. Aunt Mary, with a tranquil expression of faith and expectedness, stood there on her weak legs, supporting herself with a trembling grip on the table, and surveyed the excited group in the kitchen.

In stalked Cal triumphantly.

With a sarcastic smile of pity he shook his head.

"Did you see the bear?" he asked.

"I guess we did," affirmed Mrs. Darridiel, "and you may be sure that I'll never go to that orchard again in the evening."

"And do you know what he looked like?"

"He was the biggest thing I ever saw," answered the doctor's sister-in-law.

"And now you know a bear when you see him?" kept up the unmerciful inquisitor.

"Of course, I've seen many of them in the zoo," assured him one of the girls. "You can't mistake his claws and snout."

"And the ragged pelt," exclaimed the other.

"And do you know who he is?"

There was no answer.

"Why, the bear you saw is the only dog in the village!"

The men had a hearty laugh. The women looked at each other in silence. "He won't harm no one," said Aunt Mary with prophetic confidence, and added with chuckled voice, "The poor dog certainly got frightened."

"At any rate," concluded the Doctor's wife, "we're not going back to the orchard. Instead, we'll sit down on the porch and have our story."

"City folks are a queer lot," observed Cal after they had taken their seats around the porch. "Only this morning a young feller wuz askin' me how many dozens of eggs a hen laid in a day."

"Well," angrily retorted Ben, "small wonder. If we keep on heaping barriers between the city chil-

dren and nature's truth, we'll certainly return to the paganism of the superstitious!"

"How do you make that out?" inquired Al, incredulously. "Ben, I believe you are so much infested with Tolstoy's ideas that you cannot be expected to give credit to the civilizing agency and the forward march of our educational institutions."

"Please don't give praise where none is due, Al. I happened on that idea only after hearing of a city boy who wanted to know how many dozens of eggs were laid by a hen in one day. Now, to conclude from it, I say, if education cannot teach a child the simplest thing in nature, how is it to acquaint it with the naturalness of greater phenomena? Do you wonder that the grown-ups have to make an image of God in order to grasp the divinity of nature? If you no longer are able or if you never were apt to grasp the spirit of things, you fall victim to the aspect of matter and become a worshipper of exteriors, be they a person or a pole."

"It's the rule of woman, after all," came from the voice of the Brooklyn druggist who sat in the rear close by the Armenian girls. "They've made a mess of it in the kitchen and at the school, dyspepsia on the one hand and superficiality on the other. Woman is a passive nature, good for employment under directions. Indeed, if I had to choose, I'd only employ women. Passiveness implies patience, calmness, obedience, regularity, in short, everything that shuns

originality and initiative, which is a man's world of push, adventure, search, independence."

"But I intend to show you," vehemently put in the Doctor's wife, "how much of a beast is man's ambition and how much of a sacrifice a woman's lot. The incident to-night illustrates how impressive are our imaginative powers. I dreamed I visited a land whose culture is entirely different from that of its rulers. Although I never lived in the town through which I walked in my dream, and though I have never witnessed the barbarities of pacification by martial law, yet so reproductive of actual life was my nocturnal reverie—perhaps a reflex from reading—that it vividly brought home to me the terrors of facing a savage beast. All and everything, from the street to the room, from the flowers to the mother, appeared to me as objects of intimate familiarity, and I hope by narrating my experience to so inflame with passion your love for justice that you will combine your wits with the best efforts of noble men and women to run down

THE BEAST THAT THREATENS MOTHER.

It was in the gray of a winter morning that I found myself walking through the deserted streets of a town on the Baltic coast. Like tombs in the City of the Dead stood the monumental buildings from the days of Biron amid the rows of shutter-nailed houses. As I stepped out on the barren mar-

ket my feet sounding on the cobble stones waked the echo from the shadowed colonnades. For, strangely enough, snow did not cover the frost-bitten ground.

As I heard the muffled tramp of soldiers and the warning beat of a drum I retreated to the dark portal of the Trinity Church, to await the exchange of the patrol and the withdrawal of the troopers. Then, closely watching the fur-covered Russian soldier as he paced up and down the guard-house on the market-place, I slowly, stealthily creeping along the houses, turned the corner and made for the street along the frozen river. Through the double rows of trees I hastened, my eyes wet with tears, as I perceived my beloved gardens on the opposite bank and the sinister schloss and, far beyond, the deep forests in the grip of a remorseless ban and bewitched silence.

I dared hardly breathe. On my toes I turned into the street leading to my mother's home. I found the shutter tightly locked, but the door unfastened. Stealing on tip-toe through the hall I entered the kitchen and then the bedroom of my mother. How sweet would be the kiss I'd press on the loving lips of my beloved parent, a kiss missed so long, oh, so long! "Good-night, dear!"

But—there was not the dear face of my mother on the pillow. Under the cover a strangely breathing body moved so mysteriously that its deep and inaudible strokes deterred me from leaning forward. In dread and anguish I contemplated the singular form before me and receded in horror. Foreboding something that threatened my life and lay for my mother, I hastened through the forsaken rooms.

In the sitting room was light. The old lamp on the round table burned with a suppressed flame. Here my mother sat calmly on the sofa as if awaiting me.

With endearing words and looks she tried to dispel my anxiety.

"But the figure under the bed-cover?" I exclaimed with hushed voice. "I see everything is quiet, yea, dead. But the stillness fills me with fear and suspicion. Methinks, veiled murder hides under this quiet cover."

The face of my mother, glorified by sacrificial affection, retained its unchanging composure as with a sad gesture she whispered, leaving her seat:

"Be calm, my daughter. Day in, day out, year after year, your mother has slept under this shelter that you consider so gruesome. Your mother is born to suffer and she doesn't fear the present. Your mother is used to the sight of the terrible and no forebodings unnerve her."

On her stoic mien there lay no ray of contentment. I caught her arm and begged her to flee with me.

"Let us go,—quick—away, away, from here!"

"Go?" she repeated, incredulously dismissing the thought, "Go? How? With——?"

The last syllable died unuttered on her lips. A tremor shook quickly through her body as she put her finger to the mouth and pointed her look anxiously at the inner rooms.

At this minute, silent as a lone and calm desert, I could distinguish the groping movements of a beast incensed with determination in its soft claws. As if lifted by a gust of wind, the portiere in the doorway rose and something covered with the drawn cloth disappeared under the table.

The eyes of my mother, tranquil as she was, rested on me with an all absorbing love.

"Whose turn will it be?" asked I myself. "Is it my life or my mother's, or is it both our lives, the brute will demand?"

Only a fickle leap separates the brute from the booty.

Suddenly the heavy monster jumps upon the cracking sofa and the head of a tiger towers over the table as with threatening yawn he beholds his prey.

Quicker than my eyes could follow, my mother, pushing me aside, thrust her arm into the jaws of the brute——.

Bewildered I ran out for help. My cries drew a patrol of soldiers to the rescue, who, strangely enough, landed me on this side of the Ocean.

CHAPTER V.

It was only a natural consequence when on the following evening the thoughts of the occupants of the white house reverted to the "Beast That Threatened Mother."

"What do you think now of woman, Mr. Kirkland?" asked Ben, looking back from his seat on the steps to the porch and trying to locate the druggist who had again found a seat near the Armenian girl in the rear.

"It is just what I should expect from a mother. But the impression on me was of a different nature. Never before, although often dwelling on the subject of conquest and civilization, has it occurred to me how utterly base at the root is the lust for domination and how full of crime is the history of the white race. Think of Charlemagne filling the forests of Saxony with crucified victims, or Cossacks marching from town to town, from village to village, for the summary execution of suspects, or traders inducing their governments to sanctify their thefts in foreign lands, or civilizers exterminating races and cultures of a different type! Alas, these crimes of the white race! Will there ever be a final reckoning! Will the white race have to answer for the extinction of nations and attainments, and for levelling down

everything in their way to their murderous standard?"

"You are actuated by sentimentality," criticized the salesman. "A race rules by the strength of its purity of blood and by the superiority of character."

"I've heard that so often that we might as well stop once and see what truth there is in it," began the Russian to philosophize. "The Moors ceased to rule after the stoppage of the influx of new blood, the Russians assumed their threatening attitude after they had assimilated Mongolian blood; the Finns, of Mongolian origin and Caucasian admixture, are marching in the avantguard of civilization. This to show you that the interrelation of so-called inferior and superior races does not tend to destroy a people, nor to weaken it. But if diseased nations attach themselves closely to pure people they kill the latter. This is an indictment of 'the superior race' by an 'inferior' one. As to superiority of character,—devotion to friendship under adverse circumstances is the truest illustration of nobility and firmness of character. And it is in this that the savage excels. Who but will feel a sort of pride in man's greatness when he realizes the devotion of negroes to Livingston and the perils and privations under which they brought his corpse to the coast."

"I am myself thoroughly in opposition to science in the service of bias," added the Doctor in his wonted calm spirit that fitted so well in any occasion bordering on warring conflict. "History does bear out

the statement of Ben. One way of killing off "savages" unwilling to become slaves or servants is to introduce diseases and customs peculiar of the white race. There can be no doubt but that the sentiments leading to progeny must be of a mutually attracting nature to result in a healthful and enduring race. Stealthy disposition of bestial lust will beget abnormalities in mind and body, to run a short course to utter extinction, while vigorous attraction of appreciated love will lead to generations of nobility of mind and beauty of body, to last so long as the adducing of new blood will cause the greater spontaniety to unite with the stronger, though pure, sensation."

"In entering the relations of marriage," objected Enok, "it is customary with our people to abide by the decisions of the parents. We don't favor marriage of couples from different nationalities."

Here we have to observe that Enok was using this opportunity to express his views for a certain purpose. While he himself was frequenting the society of the Doctor's wife, and while his attentions to her showed the unmistakable signs of deep-rooted affection, he was greatly discomfited at the attachment of Mr. Kirkland to his niece. The free and unguarded ways of Mrs. Freiwahl, her deliberative conversation, her versatility on so many topics, altogether so uncommon in circles of his usual surroundings, led him to regard her as a specimen of the new woman of whom he had heard spoken in unflattering terms, but

whom he had never before met, of whom he thought as humans without restraint yet of high intellectual endowments. Although he would not admit it to himself, yet he hoped vaguely of an adventure. But it was a different case with niece Maria. She was an inexperienced girl that had to be protected. And if she was to marry, those wiser than she had to look out in time lest she be estranged from the pure ideals of her people.

"I think it the proper way," explained the girl's mother more particularly Enok's contention, "that the father choose the man who is to be his son-in-law. With you here it is the custom, and unhappily patterned even by our children, that the parents have very little say in the matter. You are too free and permit too much freedom to your children."

Mrs. Freiwahl took up the gauntlet.

"This is a cause for us women to fight out. You should have said we are not free enough in this matter. We who are to be mothers, we who are first of all willing to lay down our lives to give new life to the world, we who shrink from no sacrifice to send out good and healthy offspring, we have a right, nay, the duty, to choose the men who are to be our mates."

The girl's father looked with troubled brow at his taciturn daughter and with an approving smile at his wife's brother.

"Indeed," continued the female debater hotly, "the child whose youth is saddened with the tears of

an unhappy mother drags that memory with him his long life and is from the beginning damned to an up-hill existence that too soon exhausts him. A mother owes it to her children to dissolve an unhappy union and find a happy one. And, if she is taught to discriminate between polish and purity, she will decide in most cases on fitness."

"I suppose," added the Russian, dryly, "this is the reason why I'm left in the cold."

The salesman saw here a chance to stop the debate.

"As I was going to say," he brought out bluntly, "maybe that's the reason why Jack, whom I met in my travels, found no purpose in life. But how he got it, that is the story of

JACK THE DREAMER.

Jack, the poor devil with the light heart, was in great need of help when he called on his friend, the proprietor of a dry goods store. Would Billy recognize him, he wondered.

The young man stood, expectantly, at the door of the haberdashery.

On entering the store he had greeted the proprietor with a merry "hello!", but no answer was forthcoming.

His thin coat and trousers and the slouched hat he wore were soaked with the rain that uninterruptedly fell from immovable gray clouds of a weary November day.

"Don't you know me, Bill?" inquired the visitor, walking up to the counter.

"Well, well—what in the world brings you here?" exclaimed the proprietor, and, to judge from his looks, he was painfully surprised.

"To tell the truth, Bill," answered the visitor warmly, "it's a mere chance. I haven't heard from you the last couple years, and I didn't know that you were prosperous and in business for yourself on this great thoroughfare. So I was quite surprised when, coming down the street, you know, I happened to read your name on these windows."

With satisfaction in his eyes, he looked at the many shelves laden with boxes and all kinds of material, at the two sales counters with their display of toilet articles, at the show cases startling one's sight with the assortment of ribbons, embroidery, trimmings, patterns and what not.

William Hanlon,—what impudence, to call him Bill!—owner of the dry-goods store, left his place behind the counter and, approaching his visitor, surveyed him and the linoleum covering the floor with scrupulous eyes. From the door to the counter the floor was marked with the wet footprints of the intruder.

The storekeeper quickly retreated, and, returning with a mop, hurriedly cleaned up.

The stranger bit his lip. In his confusion he took his hat off and shook it, forgetting that William Hanlon had just cleaned the linoleum.

"Prosperous and in business!" grumbled the latter after he had thrown the mop into a rear-room. "Well, Jack, it was, and still is, a hard piece of work to struggle with competition and bad times,—such as a slack season like this will give. Believe me, it's many a night that I lie awake over my business troubles. You need not think that I am prosperous just because I am in business on this avenue. I still,

though, am able to keep my own. But, this I must tell you frankly, that I will judge you——"

"Stop right here!" interrupted him the other. "Stop right here! I didn't ask you for anything. I am well able to take care of myself."

"I can see it!" retorted the storekeeper, sneeringly.

For a moment they looked at each other in silence. What a contrast in these two men! The storekeeper —tall, well-fed, broad-shouldered, carefully groomed, with eyes of a lynx that were either cast to the floor or looked stealthily at the hands and pockets of those engaged in conversation with him; quite bald-headed, with a dark brown beard that gave his matter-of-fact face somewhat of a professional appearance. The other, smaller of stature—with a coat too small and trousers too long, a face that badly needed a shave, and cheeks pale and thin; and yet out of his eyes shown eternal spring, his blue eyes laughed with a confidence of a cloudless sky, his forehead, crowned with an abundance of curly blond hair, visibly bore the pride of noble thoughts.

"Now, Jack," began William Hanlon again, "this is dinner time——"

He was interrupted by a customer entering the store.

Jack smiled. Surely, Bill was better than his temper.

The customer was attended to and William Hanlon, after the door had been closed, continued:

"Yes, this is dinner time, Jack, and my help will soon return. I cannot have you here in this outfit." And his eyes examined once more the poor garments of his visitor.

Jack smiled again. Clothes were just what he needed. No doubt, Bill was going to give him a start. Old-time friendship is not forgotten so easily, and

were there ever such friends as they had been—up till about five years ago?

"I must keep up my reputation," concluded the storekeeper slowly, "it is upon the respect of the people and your help, that your success in business lies. Besides, I've got children at home that must be brought up in the respect of their parents. I cannot leave you here and neither can I take you there. It is all your own fault."

He paused. Jack now took in the situation at a glance. He put his hat on and turned towards the door.

"Here now!" added his one-time friend drawing a coin from his pocket and offering it to Jack. "You'll be a welcome guest at my house as soon as you have mastered your passions for roaming through the country and dreaming nonsense."

Jack did not touch the proffered coin.

"Good-bye, Bill," he said, sadly but firmly, "I thought you'd give me a chance,—but I bear you no grudge. You're no better or no worse than the rest of them. I needed somebody or something to give me a purpose in life. No, I'll never accept any help from you, never. But I bear you no grudge. Good-bye!"

With this he resolutely opened the door and walked out into the rain and slush of the deserted street.

William Hanlon looked a moment at the door through which Jack had so quickly disappeared. He was sorry for the lad. But what could he do? He might go to the expense of fitting him out with new clothes, might find for him a place in the store,—Jack was by no means a block-head. He could be more than useful to his employer. Yet—it would hardly pay. Jack was a dreamer, just a dreamer, above all a dreamer. Some fine morning, when the

air was balsamic with the odor of spring, or the sun shone brightly from a clear sky, he would disappear, go out into the country, forget his duties to the store and his benefactor. He might return in a few days or in a few years,—who knows? All expenses and trouble would be for naught. It is quite troublesome to acquaint a new clerk with the stock and the method of one's business. A new clerk often spoils trade. 'Tis true, they had been intimate friends from boyhood, once had given each other a sacred promise to remain true to each other unto death. But they had been youths then, both of them were over thirty now. Jack was a first class accountant. Had he been steady, he would to-day be a respected man. Could he rely on him?

William Hanlon was satisfied. He had done the right thing under the circumstances, had acted as a business man, in his opinion, should act, and he was ready to resume his duties behind the counter. Things went well with William Hanlon. Nobody could ascribe his success in business to good luck. It was the reward of hard work. He had begun with the little store out in W——, a suburb of Brooklyn, after the death of his parents. He had married well and wisely. His wife was a wide-awake saleslady and a thrifty housekeeper. With the money she had brought into their household he was enabled to abandon the suburban place, where he could see no prospect for the future, and open an up-to-date haberdashery on the busy avenue in Brooklyn.

All went well with the Hanlon family. They lived around the corner in a three-story brick house, had a servant to take care of the house and the children —two girls and a boy—the oldest, a girl of six, going to school already.

Like a good business man, Hanlon was always

mindful of changing his surplus money into additional stock, thus gaining the reputation of being the most attentive and trustworthy storekeeper on the avenue. Mr. and Mrs. Hanlon had come to the agreement to think of the Savings Bank in the next years, when their business had sufficiently grown to warrant its solid foundation.

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But there soon came a time when all the stock dwindled down to the bare shelves, when all the proverbial shrewdness of William Hanlon seemed to fail him, all the alertness of his wife remained fruitless and all her counsel unheeded.

It was a particularly hot summer. Hanlon, who had grown quite stout, felt oppressed in the atmosphere of his ill-ventilated, deep and narrow store. But he did not feel justified to leave it for a short vacation, especially not, since he had told his help he did not "believe in vacations."

One morning,—the sun was shining down with a burning gaze upon the dry streets with their heated walls and windows,—the asphalt itself seemed to melt under the weary pace of the pedestrian,—the dry goods store was just packed with women and children, fanning themselves as they examined the various light articles—Hanlon, with perspiration from brow to fingernails, his mouth open as though he was suffocating, was suddenly seen to falter and, amid the frightened yells of the customers, to fall to the floor.

He never recovered fully from that stroke. After a few months he regained his power of speech, the use of his arms, but his legs remained paralyzed.

And now things went from bad to worse. The misfortune of his sickness left an indelible impress on his temper. He became so irritable that even

his children had to suffer under the irrational outbreak of his whim. His wife, once his comfort and companion, could, try as she may, no longer comfort or advise him. After his partial recovery he sat in the store and grumbled. The store had suffered from his absence. The creditors showed impatience. The advice of Mrs. Hanlon, to sell the shop and realize the profit of its good reputation, met with his curt demand that she concern herself about her household duties and not about the management of this business, which was *his* sphere of activity. Henceforth Mrs. Hanlon was not seen in the store any more.

William Hanlon acted contrary to his own business principles. Stock had run very low; the daily receipts sunk far below the average. He was trying to persuade his customers to buy goods they did not want. He quarreled with his help. He showed them openly that he was suspecting them of dishonesty. He engaged and discharged the assistants in quick succession.

The Hanlon family was obliged to move into cheaper quarters. The servant was discharged.

Then one of his former clerks opened a haberdashery just a couple of doors away from Hanlon's.

Finally, one morning, the people of the neighborhood, who had long expected it, found the door locked. An auction sale took place and, after the proceeds had been counted and the creditors satisfied, there did not remain enough money for William Hanlon to pay for a month's rent.

Mrs. Hanlon came to the rescue. As soon as her husband's actions had become irrational and she was forbidden to mix in the affairs of the store, she realized the stern necessity of saving. She was somewhat prepared to meet the heavy blow.

But in spite of all her economy, the few hundred dollars she had saved lasted but a few months. Then began the hard struggle to keep the wolf from the door. She heard a youngster's voice wail, and could not grant the request. She felt a hand at her apron, and was unable to comfort the child. The pink from their cheeks, the laughter from their eyes,—in short, health and happiness she saw taking leave from her children, and she was unable to satisfy the demands made on her motherly love. She saw it all with grief in her heart that even in tears could find no consolation.

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Another year had passed. The Hanlons had left Brooklyn and found a refuge in the suburb W——. Friends had helped the family at first. Mrs. Hanlon had gone out scrubbing and washing, thus earning a livelihood for the family. Her health was wrecked by cares and work. However, the expenses were too high for her earning capacity. Therefore, when an acquaintance of theirs offered them a shanty out in W—— for a slight monthly remuneration, at the same time opening to Mrs. Hanlon some prospects of earning a living there, they accepted the offer as a means of relief. The shanty stood at the foot of a slope on the top of which lay the high-road. A tree in front of it, with wide-reaching branches, covered it from the view of the passer-by. It was a tottering, worm-eaten, one story wooden hut, consisting of two rooms.

William Hanlon, or what was once William Hanlon,—a despondent man with a shrunken frame—lay on an old lounge full of gashes, showing its springs and dark horsehair. Now and then a deep sigh wrested itself from his martyred breast, as his restless eyes wandered through the small room fur-

nished, all told, with a cheap table, a lamp without a chimney, a chair without the back, an oil stove resting on a soap box, a side-board that had seen better days, and a few boxes lying in one corner of the room. From the adjoining room could be heard the hushed tittle-tattle of children. They were playing on the bed that covered two-thirds of the space. The windows were nailed up. The little fresh air, entering through the half opened door, could scarcely purify the stuffy atmosphere. And yet the surrounding country seemed so fresh, the grass and bushes seemed to gayly bid "Good-night!" to the setting sun.

The chatter of the children grew louder. A boy's voice rang out in hilarious forgetfulness of the situation. The girls giggled.

"Where is my cane!" threatened the tortured man on the lounge, "I'll teach you how to behave!"

All was still. No sound was heard save, now and then, the moaning of the invalid.

It grew dark. It was high time for supper But the children did not venture out of their hiding place. Perhaps they knew there was no food in the house. Perhaps they had fallen asleep. William Hanlon was tortured more by his thoughts than his physical wretchedness.

Presently he was startled by a knock at the door. He did not believe his ears. Who would knock at his door? Even the last of beggars wouldn't espy his retreat.

The knocks at the door were repeated; this time quite forcefully. The voice of his little boy cried out, as though in fear, for his mother.

"Who's that?" inquired Mr. Hanlon.

"A friend of yours," responded a familiar voice.

A shiver ran down the back of William Hanlon.

No, no, he did not want to see the owner of that voice. What did he want here?

"Never mind!" he replied, "leave me alone."

"If I'm not invited," said the stranger, while he opened the door and entered, "I might as well come in without further ceremonies."

He walked up to the invalid and grasped his hand.

"Billy, my old friend, dear boy, I am heartbroken to hear of all that, and you wouldn't even give me a chance to keep you company for an hour or two?"

It was dark and the figure of the man was unrecognizable, his face—as he now sat down upon the lounge—was shadowed by a slouched hat.

"I know," began William Hanlon, "I've acted cowardly——"

"Nonsense, Bill!" interrupted the visitor, "you've done the right thing. Wasn't I a young and strong man? What right had I to impose on anybody? But now let's forget it. I'll tell you how I found you. Out of mere curiosity I went to see your old stand in Brooklyn. At first I thought you had moved to a still finer place and was going to leave the matter rest at that. Subsequently, though, I heard from an old-time neighbor of yours what had happened, and —that's why I'm here."

He jumped up and struck a match to light the lamp. It was Jack, the same Jack—with eyes full of hope, and poorly fitting clothes.

"Where is the family?" inquired Jack.

"Mrs. Hanlon," replied the invalid with cast-down looks, "is in the city, earning our bread in the sweat of her brow. The children are in the bedroom."

"Come out, children!" called Jack, encouragingly, "I've got something for you."

One by one they appeared. Jack had never lived through a more painful experience than was given

him when the boy and the two girls came out from the bedroom. Unkempt, bruised, with rags on their backs, a deadly pallor on their faces—they stood there an image of misery in despair.

Jack gave them a cake of chocolate. "Divide it among yourselves," said he with a smile that won him the hearts of the children.

The father, in a way of excuse, was relating to Jack how the children, owing to their ragged appearance, were made the targets of all kinds of molestations and missiles from the boys in the neighborhood; how his wife had for the last three days left early in search of work and come home late without finding any; how the last piece of stale bread had been eaten to-day for dinner and, added he, "now you are spoiling their appetite for supper with chocolate."

The sarcasm could not be mistaken. And yet it seemed to Jack as though the spirits of his friend were returning.

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Cautiously the door was opened and a woman, upon entering, surveyed with surprised eyes the small gathering.

All was soon explained, and, since Jack had known her in her girlhood days, they lost no time on ceremonial introduction. But was that the same girl? The rosy cheeks, the round, smiling face with its enticing dimples, the elastic gait, were gone; the woman now sitting on the chair, tired and careworn, looked like a veiled skeleton.

The children, meanwhile, had examined the contents of a basket the mother had given them. Soon each one of the trio had a bone, or a pretzel, or a doughnut, and they ate with an appetite that only hunger can give.

Mrs. Hanlon had no time to rest, although she was tired from a half-day's washing and a five-mile walk. She had earned fifty cents; on the fields here she earned but twenty-five cents a day. She was not very strong, she added, and could not work as well as others. Mrs. Hanlon began to make preparations for supper. After filling the stove with kerosene oil, she lighted it and placed a kettle of water upon it. Into the latter she put a few fresh bones, adding occasionally some more cold water. Then she broke up some bread, and, with a spoonful of lard and some pepper and salt, added it to the concoction.

Jack, meanwhile, was so busy with answering questions of the children that he soon forgot the presence of the parents.

"So you want me to describe the city I come from?" said he in answer to a query from the four-year-old boy whose head rested on Jack's knee. "Very well, let us commence with the streets, for they are entirely different from those you have seen in Brooklyn or out here. They are twice as wide as the avenue on which your father's store was. We should call them low-roads because they are built lower than the side-walks. These latter, in the City of Risen, are one story above the level of the street; wide enough for a row of ten men to pass; protected by high metal fences through which, here and there, reach the branches and blossoms of trees below.

"All walks are connected by bridges. These bridges, again, by means of stairs, are connected with the streets below. It is not necessary, therefore, to cross the street and risk one's life while trying to evade the bewildering press of street-cars and wagons running to and fro.

"The blocks are at least twice as large as customary in our cities, and the centre within each block con-

stitutes a small park, thus rendering pure air to the inhabitants.

"Over every square is spanned, like a high canopy, a roof that, in case of rain, is protected by canvas, like the roof-gardens of our theatres. These roofs are a great source of pleasure to the children; the boys and girls make them their playgrounds. The people of Risen are as good to one another as their city is beautiful."

He stopped abruptly. The little boy whose head was resting on Jack's legs was softly snoring. He handed the child over to Mrs Hanlon and, offering an excuse for not remaining for supper, took leave.

He did not go far. He walked a few yards to the rear of the shanty and threw himself upon the grass under a tree.

He felt oppressed. Never had his utter helplessness caused him so much grief as to-night. He could not redeem the past. He despised himself. Wasn't it criminal for him, the young and healthy man, to stand idly by and leave that family of his friend perish,—as perish they must?

He was angry with himself. He was a good-for-nothing. Not a penny in his pockets, the last nickel spent on a cake of chocolate for the dear little ones.

He looked up to the winking stars, but he could not be cheered by them as of old.

All was quiet. Not a leaf stirring. No chirp was audible. Not even a dog's bark interrupted Jack's wandering thoughts. The bright moon presently hid its face behind a thin white cloud. The stars stopped clinking to one another. The universe seemed to be awed into attentive stillness by some holy moment, the approach of which it was expecting.

Jack's heart was full to overflowing. He felt as though he ought to cry, cry, cry.

Long forgotten impressions came to life again.

"My heart is heavy, my rest is gone,"

repeated he over and over again, although he could not recollect when and where he had heard it.

"Love, love!" cried Jack, as his body shook convulsively. "Give them your love, and what greater purpose in life do you need?"

Jack was startled by his own thoughts. His soul was sterile from the emptiness of his life, but the joy of his resolution filled him with pride. With joy in his heart, he jumped up and cast a triumphant look at the sky. The moon seemed to smile, the stars to fly in merry dance, the leaves to shake a welcome and the whistle of a nearby passing train to cheerfully salute him.

* * * * *

The next evening found Jack again sitting in the shanty and, surrounded by the Hanlon family, mapping out a programme.

"I've got a job and a good one. And now listen. I don't permit any opposition. It's the best thing that could happen to me and you. What I earn goes to the support of the family, me included. Next thing to do will be to move to the city. The mistress starts a small boarding house. Don't kick. All money invested can be returned. That's all. How I got the job? Dead easy. I went to friends and told them persistently that I was in earnest, meaning to settle down to serious business. And they hustled."

And while Mr. and Mrs. Hanlon looked at him in astonishment, Jack got busy with the children and jigged with them through the little room.

And he kept his promise.

CHAPTER VI.

All were aglow with expectation of the story the Russian would tell. He was known as a sociologist of some attainments, with decided views on the liberation of mankind.

None could have wished an audience better equipped to understand him and a surrounding more pleasing to the senses. As they sat there in groups on the porch, some, as the druggist among the Armenians, hidden in a dark corner; others, like the hosts, the salesmen and the Doctor's family, tinctured by the soft silver of the moon; the Russian on the steps facing the mirrored lake that languidly and longingly leaned on the surrounding forests, could not fail to catch the spirit of contentment that, from the chirping of the insects to the lullaby of the water, went with wondrous words through Nature.

He turned round to his eager friends and leaned on the balustrade in the easy posture of the habitual talker.

"If one permits the goodness in Nature to impress ones's self, one wonders that there are great ill is oppress us," he began meditatively, "but ills there are, and we pay the debt we owe to kind Nature only by removing them.

"For every ill there is a cause, just as there is a beginning to every injustice. You cannot say, the conqueror is mild, he is scrupulous, he does not follow up his victories with devastation, and hence, not being an exterminator, he is conscious of the rights of his subjected creatures and a respecter of their liberty. No, my dear Enok, there is a beginning to all injustice. And the only way to unmake his folly is for the conqueror to step down from the pedestal and live as a plain man among a plain people. Don't tell me that the liberty of a people can be created by a tyrant or can be forgotten by all the rest of subjugated men. She lives in song and tradition, in dreams of wanderers like Jack and The Wreck, in the stoicism of the Mother, in the fall of the water, in the flight of birds.

"Don't you see how daily and for a thousand and more years, men, women and children are emigrating from land to land in search of liberty? Don't you see them leave grief-stricken their dear hamlets and loving parents in search of liberty,—never to return to their adored ones though years of tears may torture them?

"Yea, and there are a thousand and more examples to wake man's passion for liberty, and you need not the cabals of despots to kindle the flames.

"Every man and every land loves liberty. And so great is this yearning that among all nations and at all times rise men with unbounded love for their

fellow-beings, who go out to praise the gospel of liberty,—that liberty which means peace.

"Let me give you to-night one such illustration of the eternal question of Liberty and Peace, and that is the story of

SABBATHIA.

The news had reached a Rajah, that far away, hidden in the depths of the jungles and isolated from all the rest of India by an enchanted and encircling sea, lay an island that contained a people whose customs were entirely different from the culture of the Orient or Occident.

Forthwith he equipped a splendid retinue of servants and warriors, reviewed his docile elephants and set out to conquer and make tributary to his kingdom a land whose independence vexed him.

For weeks they rode aimlessly through the jungles, facing almost insurmountable dangers and fighting treacherous beasts crowding on their path. Herds of elephants rushed noisily by them and many a hungry, lonely panther roved at them. They had almost given up hope of ever reaching their destiny when presently their attention was caught by a peculiar bustle. It seemed as though nearby a thunderstorm devastated the country, and yet, as far as their eyes could reach, the sky was clear and bright. As they rode ahead, the dull racket increased. It sounded like rocks rolling down a distant mountain and striking a surging sea. The farther they penetrated in the direction of the noise, the more threatening, the madder it grew.

Anxiety oppressed the minds of his retinue and

the Rajah called upon the Brahman to explain the situation. But the latter, himself thoroughly shaken up, interpreted the mysterious phenomenon as an omen of the wrath of Siva for the slaying by the Rajah of two sacred animals, an antelope and a serpent. Luckily, the Rajah had been wise enough to surround himself with most devoted followers and to select a Brahman who as novice had been very unpopular. Thus it happened that his personality got the better of the caste, and, somewhat reassured by the influence of his soothing words, the train slowly moved on.

In the evening of that day, after the sun had disappeared behind the thick bamboo bushes and the night had spread its noiseless wings over the country, they perceived a wonderful spectacle of nature. Above them twinkled a few of the brightest stars. Purple nebula now and then rose from the east, crossed the sky and died away, extinguished, at the opposite firmament. From innumerable gullets shot up ignivomous tongues, and beneath them vapors whirled up from a seething liquid flowing down to the valley. And, although no clouds covered the sky, vehement lightning convulsed the atmosphere.

The elephants could not be mastered any longer. Shaking off their burden and blaring their dread into the trembling air, they stamped impatiently on the ground and fled tumultuously into a forest. The sight of this enigmatical event in nature had so filled the Hindus with fright and horror that led by the Brahman who now had become master of the situation they knelt down and vowed to the revengeful deity not to approach their secrets, and to return home. The Rajah alone remained steadfast in his resolution to follow up his undertaking. But when tired from the journey he had fallen into deep slum-

ber, they secretly stole away. Whether they ever reached home or whether they became a prey to roaming beasts is not known. But certain it is that upon awakening Rao Saib received no answer to the numerous calls for his followers, save that of a mocking echo.

Rao Saib was safe from the attacks of wild beasts since the bustling, flaming wilderness frightened them away. With equanimity he yielded to fate and began to look around for what comfort he could obtain during his sojourn in the neighborhood. Soon he had espied a banyan-tree the supports of which were so numerous, and plentiful with branches, that with the soft ground underneath it furnished him a welcome and spacious hut. Gathering bamboo, he twisted it around the horizontal supports of the banyan and, plucking some foliage, prepared a resting-place for the night. During the day the dense foliage of the tree protected him from the burning sun and during the night the bamboo-fence guarded him from possible harm by vociferous animals.

For he could plainly distinguish the grunting of a wild boar from the grumbling of a bear or the howling of tigers. Screaming eagles roused him from his sleep. Bisons and asses brawled at each other. Even though he knew that they all were frightened away by the phenomenon before them, he could not help listening attentively so much the more as he had to be on his guard against the treacherous cobra.

On the third day the fiery storm abated. A pleasant coolness spread over the land and quickly dried declivity and valley. A baya leaving her bottle-shaped nest flew out upon the inhospitable plain. No more assured of safety, Rao Saib left the hut and hastened toward the now tranquil mountain-side. He soon trod upon stony ground bare of all vegetation,

and not before he had walked with great difficulty half a day did he reach the naked stone walls of steep mountains. After much searching and wandering he finally located a defile and through this path, crooked so that he could see the world neither behind nor beyond him, he finally emerged at the other end and beheld a restless and vast expanse of water. Vapor rose from its surface but was cooled by a contrary temperature in the air and thrown back into the lake. Here it boiled like scalding water in a colossal caldron.

Beyond the water Rao Saib's keen eye saw land. To be sure, that was his goal, the island. That rich, happy, legendary island, that he was going to conquer, but could never even reach and perhaps will be the cause of his early and terrible death.

As the heat near the water had become unbearable, he ascended a rock. His head, tormented with anxiety, sank to his chest, and Rao Saib, who had never winced under peril or misfortune, bemoaned his fate and gave up hope.

At dusk the tumult subsided somewhat. The lake, stirred incessantly, was no longer covered by vapors; it stormed no longer wildly from its depths but threw its wanton waves with undulating regularity upon the shore. But just as soon as all life seemed to have died away in the lake, the ground around Rao Saib grew warm and the mountains became active. A deep, gurgling, rattling sound seemed to labor in the bowels of the earth.

Rao Saib jumped up and ran down. The will of Siva had decided against him and he was prepared to meet death. He threw himself into the still warm water and closed his eyes in submission. But an invisible power drew him forth over the water. Although he felt no hand on his body and perceived no

solid body under him, yet the swimmer was convinced that a power not his own led him safely through the lake. He opened his eyes to assure himself of the reality of his adventure and saw flames rising from the mountain tops. The bank he had left far behind him, and the water upon which he floated lying on his back gave way and closed him in like soft and liquid metal.

Presently he felt his head resting on solid and mossy ground and, arising, looked with wonderment at his new surroundings. The glow of the natural forces on the opposite shore illuminated gardens and mansions of an exquisite coloring and architecture, such as he had never seen before. But he did not venture forth for fear of obtruding upon the rights of watchful and jealous inhabitants. Instead, being tired, he lay down on his landing place and soon fell asleep.

The next morning, as he awoke, he saw a man standing near him and gazing at him in friendly astonishment. Rao Saib jumped to his feet and began to apologize. But the Islander welcomed him and bid him follow to his home.

Rao Saib confessed to himself that he had never seen a type of such perfect manhood. Of all the nations living in India, there was none that could produce his like. The majesty of a noble and conscious mind spoke through his repose. Wisdom and gentleness shone from his forceful and sparkling eyes. Around the fine lips of his small mouth played a superior smile, and his thin hand stroke the full, waving hair back from a wide and high brow. His body whose scanty garment hung artistically from one shoulder, was broader and taller than Rao Saib had ever come across and, in fact, was unquestionably nowhere else on earth to be found.

The Islander led him to a group of men and women of the same type. For the first time in his life he felt himself overawed by the presence of woman. It seemed to him that these women were yet superior to the men, themselves superior to all other men. The softness of their features was like the rose flower on their breasts, the grace of their manner as fragrant with vigor as the mature lily-stalks in the garden.

Mentally and bodily, as it were, so much inferior to his surrounding hosts, Rao Saib dared not lift his eyes. But the man who had met him at the shore, cheered him up soon with the following words:

"Show your courage, stranger. Though you might never had lived among such as we are, you are amidst well-wishers and friends. The revelation of the Vedas and the vision of the Upanishads, sacred to you, we do not worship. We do not profess to know the paths that lead to Brahma and await his appearance with steadily growing minds. But you may know that a peaceful life four-thousand years old has revealed the human genius that conquers all suffering and injustice. While in the world without hatred and jealousy perpetuated wars and theft, while the bloody rule of might has ever again thrown an ascending culture, nurtured by peace, back into ancient barbarism, this island fostered and nursed the love for mutual tolerance, elevated the aspirations of generosity and directed the minds to the search of the secrets in nature. Since we did not squander our lives on calamities and baseness, our strife for perfection has rewarded us with knowledge and happiness. We command the elements, the lake obeys us, and the mountains work for us.

"This island is called Sabbathia, the land of peace. Peace lies in our work and in our play. Mental and

physical action are evenly balanced with play and rest.

"Seldom one has ventured near our land. The dangers of the surrounding hills and lake have deterred most of the investigating explorers. But if it were not for the difficulty of reaching us, we and our culture would have been long since destroyed by frivolous trespassers.

"Stay, friend, with us so long as it pleases you. Nobody will molest you. And you may remain with me until you become accustomed to the conditions prevailing here."

The home of his host was closed in by a wide garden filled with fruit trees; citrons, melons, dates and figs vied with the morning sun in freshness and friendliness. The spacious rooms with high domes and slender pillars were trimmed with paintings and adorned with statues, the handiwork of the inmates, as Rao Saib was told. Musical instruments of a great variety hung from masterfully painted walls.

Through these rooms he was led by his host and hostess to a small open court in which stood a vine-covered bower and where a meal of dates and cereals had been prepared for him. He was left alone.

Soon he was startled by the sweet and low voices of singers, evidently his newly found friends accompanied by small children, and yet he could not believe that human effort was capable of such enchanting harmony. Rao Saib closed his eyes. An ecstasy, heretofore totally unknown to him, filled his soul. The tender voice of a mother, lulling to sleep her harmed child, could not calm a bewildered heart with like assuring sympathy.

A couch on one side of the little room lured Rao Saib, whose tired limbs had grown heavy after the repast, to lay down softly and listen dreamily. And

as the melodious tunes floated through the vibrating air and fused, as it were, all noble sentiments together into one felicity, they redeemed the fettered grandeur in Rao Saib's soul and melted away the harsh pettiness around his heart.

With contentment overtaking him, he fell into a sound sleep.

When he awoke, he was seized by an unconquerable enthusiasm. He felt it his appointed office to liberate the world from error. Oh, if he could but return and picture to mankind the bliss of peace! No sooner had he met his host again, when he related to him his resolution. The Islander, not in the least surprised, warned him gently.

"You are neither the first nor will you be the last man who has come to the conclusion that the world must be won for the truth of this land. Even from among us once in a while some one leaves the island to go to these savages and liberate them from the yoke of delusion. But seldom one has returned. He was persecuted wherever he intended to stay. His words were made the object of derision. And if a few comprehending the truth would follow him they were also exposed to ridicule and persecution. The lot of the brave was an early death, disgrace and misery the fate of the wise. But incessantly and unnoticed, like the elements in the womb of the mountains, creates the mind of man, and, matured with age, it will come forth and flow over lie and delusion, hatred and arrogance. Do as you feel yourself called upon, and the bliss springing from your acts will, if not presently, make itself perceptible later."

He conducted Rao Saib to the shore and told him to throw himself upon the water just then cooled and calmed. The invisible mechanism of a mysterious power rocked him over the waves of the lake.

Gradually the water grew warmer. Over the mountains wandered lightly reddened clouds like the hot smoke from an immense furnace, rising into the cold air.

So soon as Rao Saib had reached the opposite bank the lake began to storm and towering vapors drew threateningly nearer. But quiet were the hills and the frigidity he had experienced before his visit to the island blew down the bluff. He found the narrow cut through the mountain and hastened to the valley where the cooling metal printed his fleeing footsteps. Reaching the woods and looking back, he saw innumerable vulcanoes spitting out fiery lavas.

* * * * *

After the departure of the Rajah, some Brahmans had decided to send another expedition with priests to give these servants the opportunity of transplanting in the conquered land the institutions of their country. And thus it happened that Rao Saib, making his way through the jungle, soon came upon a throng of priests and warriors who welcomed him with great joy. And hearing that the following had left the Rajah and also noticing that he was unarmed, an honorable Brahman of the third stage walked up to him and offered him a spear. But to the astonishment of the devout company Rao Saib rejected it with contempt.

"These arms," he said, "are the handiwork of misanthropes. I need them not."

The Brahmans looked at each other bewildered and puzzled. Through rows of the assembled men went a murmur of apprehension.

A friend of Rao's commanded a Parsee and a Euphrasian to bring before the Rajah an elephant. And the Rajah embraced these low men.

"You, Parsee," he addressed them, "poor, deluded soul, worship the fire that is subjected to the power of man, and you, Euphrasian, announce with your birth the fraternization of a skilfully divided mankind. You, Parsee and Euphrasian, who tremble before my caste, are my equals before the eye of truth."

He could not proceed any farther. The wrathful Brahmans seized and gagged him. They tied the innocent leaders of the elephant and left them to the hungry beasts of the jungle. Upon long deliberation the Brahmans and warriors came to the conclusion that in consequence of his privations the Rajah had lost his reason and would soon recover under their loving treatment. After a few days they gave him liberty to command their services. But Rao Saib demanded of them the two abandoned servants and called the Brahmans and their retinue murderers and villifiers. And since by a profound explanation of their doctrines he evidenced his mental sanity, they fell upon him and threw him under the elephants whose feet crushed him to death.

CHAPTER VII.

Saturday night's dance drew a large contingent of the surrounding population to the Firemen's Hall. To please the boarders, round dances were permitted. The school-mistress-organist and the town fiddler hurried their repeating times a bit so that the discomfiture at the inappropriate notes was not much felt.

But, one courtesy being worth another, the city folks soon insisted on returning to the square game. In fact, they enjoyed the spectacle of genuine hilariousness, the rioting in the stimulating revelry, as the young lads and lassies with heated expression and electrified fibre sought one another, caught, and let go, much more than the conventional roundabout from which in comparison all sentiment and gayety here seemed to be absent. The quick lad who threw so proudly back his head and beat the shaking floor with his heavy-booted foot was visibly in earnest with the smiling girl that with a modest downward look and a gracefully hurried step held out her warm hand.

"Leave 'em alone," whispered Ben, in passing, to the Doctor, "and all people are equally true."

"The world over, I think," sighed the druggist to

his Armenian girl as they marched along, "the real people are nearest to the soil, and genuinely happy."

And, truly, looking at Enok with the Doctor's wife for his partner, and at Al and the Doctor jollying the blushing country girls, there was happiness written over their glowing cheeks and in their sparkling eyes.

In the door stood Bro. Cal, with lighted lantern in hand, watching from under his heavy eyebrows the merry dancers with an amusing smile around the usual Saturday night's crop of whiskers. Behind him, trying to look over Cal's shoulder, the worried expression of Darridiel's upper part of face gazed into the hall.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Ross had to fight it out with Mrs. Darridiel, because Enok and his older niece had gone to the dance.

Limping Mrs. Darridiel thought dancing a dangerous sport and such merriment not to mix well with her patriarchal creed. Mrs. Ross, on the contrary, considered it indispensable to afford an outlet to youthful enthusiasm, and compatible with the test of any moral standard.

The young girl crouching on the stoop, chin in hand, longingly watched across the dark street the illuminated house through the open windows of which broke the noise of shrill music and shuffling steps and rising voices, and could not refrain from giving her own opinion on the case in question.

"Mamma wouldn't give us a chance," she well-

nigh sobbed out, giving a nervous jerk to her thick brown braids; "why, it wouldn't do her any good, anyhow."

A moment of silence ensued. The bats could be heard flying against the trees and the crickets chirping in the bush; a hawk flashed down upon the lake and splashed for his prey of fish, and the frogs' quawk, quawk, warned his sisters and brothers of the approach of the stealthy five-toed Little-one.

From the rear on the second floor the tremulous voice of Aunt Mary was heard, as if she were discussing a matter of deep concern.

"Don't Aunt Mary read beautifully?" resumed Mrs. Darridiel.

"Yes," added Mrs. Ross, "and you would think that all the great figures of the Bible were assembled in the room and she was conversing with the spirits of another world."

Heavy steps and busy voices resounded from the bridge and out of its darkness emerged the tall figure of Cal with the dangling lantern, followed by his flock of boarders.

"The train's comin', Marion! Two hours late!" At this call the Doctor's sister-in-law, wrapped in a thick shawl, crawled out of the hammock in which she had rested.

Only the trained ear of Bro. Cal could catch the sound of the cars as they left the station above.

But everybody trusted to his acumen and repaired to the station to receive the train. Fully five minutes

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later a fine whistling and subdued rolling were discernible to the ears of the expectant crowd.

Cling-long, clank-link! clambered the locomotive up the tracks. Shrilly and jolly whistled its steam straight into the sky and rolled with rollicky rumpus the train up the road, throwing before it a white and magic light that illuminated the land with a nebulous flood. And the lake and the forests woke from their dreams and the homes and hills stood up to look at the harmony of nature and men.

* * * * *

Ben and Al, the Doctor and the druggist, each a couple of inseparable friends, were to leave the Ross home on Monday morning. The first had stayed here two weeks, the latter only ten days. Enok and Mr. Darridiel, who had a lucrative rug and lace business, slack during the summer months, had made flying visits to the city in the interval of a week or two, and intended to remain in the country yet a couple of weeks.

In honor of the departing friends, Mrs. Ross on Sunday afternoon gave a picnic in the orchard. Ben with the tea-kettle and Cal with a pailful of ice-cream led the procession out of the kitchen, closely followed by Mrs. Ross with a saucepan filled with cakes, the Doctor's wife with a white tablecloth over her arm, Al with a box of cigars under his, the Doctor and druggist with tumblers and saucers, Enok with a basket containing napkins, knives and forks, and the Doctor's sister-in-law with newspapers

tucked to her bosom. The end of the procession was made up by Mr. Darridiel leading his halting wife and the two young girls with nothing but their busy whisperings.

After everything was deposited on the white spread and the lawn, all had grouped themselves on the soft grass (the dustproof old girl carefully planting a newspaper-sheet under the ladies as if grass were grown from granite pavings). Mrs. Ross, with a knowing smile, noticing the druggist in close proximity to the dark Armenian girl, served them first.

"You people are entitled to first consideration. Help your neighbor to a slice of cottage-pudding, Maria."

Maria blushed and the druggist chuckled. All eyes were directed at the couple. Poor Maria cut the cake with such vehemence that the severed part fairly flew into her admirer's lap. To make things worse, leaning over to put it back into the plate she fell over into the ready arms of the druggist.

A mild zephyr blew through the fruit-trees, and the apples and pears and peaches were gently joined in the branches.

Cal in his gay red-striped shirt sitting under an apple-tree closed his eyes and cut a grimace, as if to say, "It's too good to look at."

"As looks go," Mrs. Ross ventured to explain, while everybody seemed interested in the examination of their apportioned food-stuffs, "at least one happy couple will remember me."

Protests were heard all around.

"I don't know whom you mean," responded the druggist, "but, surest thing you know, I and Maria have concluded last night that there ought to be some knot by which to consolidate our meeting. Now I think we may as well be happy as not, if Mr. and Mrs. Darridiel have no objections."

A flurry of gestures from the named persons was all the answer they received.

"Why," said the Doctor's wife, "it is the happiest ending of our gathering. And the only thing I am sorry over is that there is not a girl attractive enough here to hold Enok's attention." Enok grew as white as his necktie. "I have tried to make it as pleasant for him as it is possible to do for a woman whose affections are divided. But, of course, it is futile for me to attempt to replace the charm and chance there are in girls."

Bro. Cal bawled out good-naturedly:

"Tain't no use kickin' at the mare 'cause the steed's kickin' up the dust. The gal's not to blame when the fellow's carbuncle's runnin' 'way with him. Mebbe he hadn't oughter come out with it. 'Tain't or'nary, but it's cuttin' a crackerjack of a match."

"Now, what do you think of the 'Wreck's Message'?" whispered Al to Ben.

The latter shrugged his shoulder, meditatingly, despairingly.

"Wal', Marion," continued Cal with a merry twinkling of the eye, "remember the time I wuz the best

singer in yonder church on the hill and you the best jigger in the village—eh?"

"Jigger?"

Marion's heavy frame shook with laughter.

Out from the kitchen now came feeble Aunt Mary holding carefully under one arm a parcel and leaning with the other on stalwart Enok who carried a heavy kettle. Only now the party realized that Enok had stolen away.

Mrs. Ross rose to meet them and took the package from her aunt. Opening it she presented to the group a ribboned and frilled blue silk bonnet.

As if moved by one thought, all joined heartily in the "old bonnet" song, replacing the gray with "blue."

"This bonnet," explained then Mrs. Ross, "is Aunt Mary's heirloom. Her mother when married got it from her mother, and the grandmother got it for a present on her wedding day. And this iron water-kettle, that I fear none of the young folks nowadays would care to lift onto the fireplace, Aunt Mary shows only on special occasions. She certainly must consider this a happy festival when she cares to make a show of her relics."

Aunt Mary was smiles all over her face. She let herself carefully down upon the lawn, shoving in her wonted fashion her clothes round to her heels.

"And now," said Mrs. Ross, seating herself again among the boarders, "as Mr. Darridiel declines to tell us a story, and since one woman here has set an

example by talking not quite in accord with the rules laid down by the men, I may as well add my mite by contributing a tale on the silly side of the masculine creatures,—pardon the slip of my tongue, creators I meant to say.

"The particular subject under discussion belongs to a tribe I don't know much about. He called himself a Swab. I don't know what capital Swabs are good for, but to judge from the kind I have in mind I wouldn't use it to swab my pig's neck with, not to mention a young woman's lips. The nearest to a Swab looked the thick, black, refractory bristles on his pumpkin head. The nose turned like a Japanese roof-cornice and the little gray eyes of an insatiable hog, contrasting conspicuously with anything human I have come across, matched well with his figure of a full-grown man bearing shoulders so slim that one would almost be inclined to swear by the Darwinian theory. Altogether, with the uncertain color of his face, he appeared like a compound fraction of the descent of man and his return to atavism.

"He was married to a young girl who was of a very reticent nature,—a plain, but throughout motherly girl who a few weeks after their wedding came to board with us and was anxiously expecting him to join her for a week or so. But he, for some reason that he did not care to disclose, left her in the dark as to the time of his arrival. But finally an ill wind blew him hither.

"Not every wind brings a blizzard or rain to fill

the lake; sometimes it brings things worse than the worst. At least, I thought so when it threw into our house

HANS WURSCHTEL.

If I think of the poor young woman who sat up at the corner-window watching for the arrival of her honeymoon bound husband, it brings tears of laughter to my eyes. And he had the funniest and almost unpronounceable name in the world, besides—Hans Wurschtel. Hans wouldn't be so bad, but Wurschtel could mean only the worst of all. And the queerest sort of the worst of all he was, no mistake on that. He was going to surprise his wife and never notified her of the exact date of his arrival for the mere gratification of his jealousy.

He had boarded a train to the Catskills, and too wise to inquire about the direction of the car sat stolidly on his seat until told that he was bound for Kaaterskill. Infuriated at the poor conductor, he demanded to be let off right there and then. Politely he was disembarked at the lone spot of Chichester and instructed to take a train back to Kingston. For three solid hours he exposed himself to the naked rays of the sun, his tongue parched with thirst and stomach pinched with hunger. But Hans Worst-of-all was not going to lose a minute to Kingston, and, furthermore, was not going to stoop down for a bit of advice or lunch.

Just like him, Hans saw in everything the worst of all. So he gained the impression that this delay was marked by Providence as a test for the virtue of his young wife. He must have known what kind of a worthy he was that he found it necessary to be in-

sensibly jealous of her. So this delay seemed to him an appropriate means of getting at the facts and verifying his supicions. He figured out that he could arrive at his destination so late and so unexpectedly that with his abilities of observation and his knowledge of human nature he would surprise her in the very act of betrayal. For by the time the train took him on he had made up his disturbed mind to accept the theory that his wife was enjoying his absence as she never would his presence. And, as a matter of course, nobody should envy her the practice, if it was on account of Worst-o'-all.

Unfortunately, there had been a customary breakdown on the road and Hans was not able to continue his travel to our homestead. But he was not so easily discouraged. A man who is the special guard of Providence finds the indomitable courage to leap over all obstacles. And so Hans, seeing again in this act another link in his chain to bound the whims of his faithless wife, rode to the next best station and tried to secure a rig to convey him further. By this time it was about nine o'clock in the evening, and it took Hans more than poor English and furious German to find one. It happened that the stable-owner there had bought that day an automobile and was trying it out with his friends. His help were afraid to take the horses for so long a drive as they were rather tired from a day's work, and the boss was heard tooting on every known and unknown road but he could not be caught.

Hans, by this time, was quite exhausted from the anguish of his heart and stomach. A couple of times he ran into the station to get hold of the telephone and call on us to help him over. But then he reflected on the worst-o'-all mission and went out again into

the sandy street for a rig and horse. At last somebody offered himself to take him out to us.

The driver was as sleepy as the horse, yet the prudent animal seemed to enjoy the drive as much as Hans to weary of it. He danced dreamily along as though he was simply waltzing in his sleep, and when the driver, awakening, humored him along, he made a couple of teasing sprints and fell into his amusing gait again.

On finally reaching the village and stopping at the railroad crossing, Hans was asked by the driver whether he knew the place.

"O, yes, certainly," the blacksmith across the street who had been roused from his first slumber by the noise of the wagon heard him answer, and turned round on the other side.

Now Hans knew the place only from the description given him in letters from his wife. But he had forgotten that there was no electric light on the village street and that the country was pitch-dark at night so that he could not see a bear from a dog. But full of confidence in his mission and wisdom he lugged his heavy satchel back to the village street. The postmaster, aroused by the heavy footsteps on the sidewalk, got up, looked through the window and went back to bed again.

Hans, somewhat shaken in his belief, felt his way back to the railroad crossing and looked around for a corner-window on the first floor, where his wife had told him she had her room.

But what is the good in seeing a window when you don't catch the house? Worst-o'-all stood before a lot of black tree-fences, but he could not distinguish a porch-pillar from a maple-trunk. So though he passed the house perhaps a dozen times he never tumbled to the window on the corner until,

weary of the unsuccessful search and tired out by the dragging satchel, he sat down on the express-box at the railroad station and beheld two moonlit windows alongside our house, but about fifteen feet above it.

By this time, shivering in his light clothes, and bloodless from the loss of sleep and food, Hans was willing to forgive his wife if only he was given a warm room and a pillow. So he got up and went forth to penetrate the mystery once more, his eye fixed on the moon-lit windows fifteen feet above the house. But the solution was too great a task even for so observing a student as Hans Worst-o'-all. After he had crossed the tracks and stood on the sidewalk at the corner, why, the two windows were just as if mopped off the sky. Returning to the station, though, two big moonlit windows behind some trees were again recognizable. Hans with a look of contempt at that mysterious spot, stretched out upon the box, using the satchel to rest his head on. In spite of the cold, he had fallen asleep, when suddenly a thunderous clink-clank well nigh knocked him off his perch. Prr-rr-whizz! the milk train rushed crash—crush! past him. No, Hans didn't dare close his eye that night.

If only he had something else to occupy his mind, to save him from falling into slumber and under the wheels of a train. But it was in vain that he looked for the key in his vest pocket to open the satchel. A cigar would suffice to distract his attention from his ignoble position. But the cigars, well concealed within his valuables, could not be gotten without a key. This was surely Worst-o'-all luck!

There remained nothing else for Hans to do but to look around and acquaint himself with his environments. The half moon overhead now watching him

with a rascally twinkling of his barely opened eye revealed to Hans a mellow plain on the sides of which, here and there, grotesque shadows of angular shapes protruded above the surface. From somewhere quaka-quaka, crawka, crawka sounds reached his wondering ear. Far away, from out the dark, two feebly flimmering lights marked his loneliness—Worst-o'-all trembled with cold.

With the growing dawn the grotesque figures assumed distinguishable forms; the dark red house began to separate itself from the bridge, the smithy stood out 'longside the woodpile, the plain gave way to the lake. Worst-o'-all's eyes were as moist from emotion as his clothes from the fog.

Somewhere there was a sound from living beings. Hans heard, out in the village, a wagon heavily rolling over a curb or a gutter. His legs stiff from the cold night and the hard lounge, he painfully made for the village, seizing with a determined grip his all-too-heavy satchel, giving one last glance at the two windows fifteen feet above the house. But what do you think that Worst-o'-all saw? Two openings between branches on the crown of a tree, through which had shone the moonlit sky. Nearly crushed by this blow at his powers of observation, the last vantage of Hans' vanity was threatened with defeat.

A wagon met him at the entrance to the bridge.

"Can you tell me, sir," stuttered Hans, his teeth clattering with frost, "where Charl Ross' residence is?"

The farmer looked at him for a moment as if to say: "O, you denatured son of a sour cider, where do they find the apples from which your ancestry sprang?" Then he drolled out:

"Turn right roun'!"

Hans following with his eyes the pointing of the

guide saw before him the house fifteen feet above which he had watched with a throbbing heart two windows in the air.

When he came up to his wife and she opened the satchel by pressing a spring, and he would not utter a word from exhaustion and disappointment, and she had to take off his shoes, and he threw himself with his dusty clothes upon the bed, and the rosy cheeks of his little wife got wet with tears, she certainly cried over a bundle of Worst-o'-all.

[THE END.]

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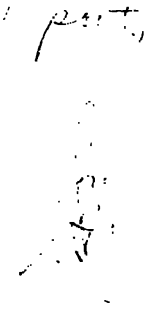
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